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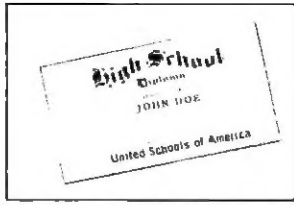

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FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION

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Down To Earth

EACH YEAR, THE MANAGERS of the current World Science Fiction Convention invite some person who has made signal contributions to the art and practice of science fiction, over a reasonably extended length of time, to be the Guest of Honor. (The actual selection, of course, is generally made the previous year, as early as possible after it has been decided upon their potential GOH.) tion will be; and it may be that those groups who make bids often have their nominee selected in advance.) While proven ability in the making and delivering of speeches may not be an absolute requirement, it's desirable to say the least. And the Nycon III Convention Committee (the third World Science Fiction Convention to be held in New York City) picked a winner on all counts: Lester del Rey, whose love for science fiction has been visibly demonstrated since the mid-30's, when we saw his fascinating and lengthy letters to Editor F. Orlin Tremaine in *Astounding Stories;* whose contributions to the fund of memorable science fiction both as author and editor have been many and persistent; and whose capacity for speaking interestingly, coherently, and rewardingly on a wide variety of subjects is a legend which has never been proven mythical.

I have something of an aversion both to long-distance travel and to large crowds (although I must confess that I find the latter entirely bearable when they're raptly listening to *me),* but a World Convention no more than three quarters of an hour away from my residence, especially one giving overdue honor to a longtime friend, was irresistible. I also have an aversion to banquets, but was prepared to endure the usual chicken (part of my aversion, since I place bird at the bottom of preferences—all praise to SFWA for avoid-

ing it two years in a row!) in order not only to participate in honoring the guest, but also in the expectation of hearing a speech worth a good deal more incidental discomfort than the choice of food. Considering what I've heard Lester do off the cuff, a speech which he'd had a year to mull over ought to be really special.

Came Monday, September 4th, and I returned to the hotel, thence to the banquet room. The day was an especially muggy one, and as a result the menu proved to be the least of discomforts; in addition, the acoustics of the hall were very poor and there was trouble with microphones. They were finally set in order before it was too late.

Now it is not only conventional, but it is good sense, sound psychology, to have a period of fun and nonsense between the dessert at a banquet and any serious speeches. That was what the royal jester of old was for; today, we look to a Master of Ceremonies for wit, with or without wisdom, to fill in for the vanished fellow wearing cap and bells.

Since I heard those around me laughing frequently, I will absolve both the Master of Ceremonies (Harlan Ellison) and, following him, the Fan Guest of Honor (Bob Tucker) for the very slight amusement that their efforts (and they were trying very hard) afforded me; after all, it would have been dismal indeed had I been the only one to have found them hilarious! However, their combined efforts ran to something between an hour and a half and two hours, as a result of which two injustices ensued.

There is no reason why, if First Fandom's Hall of Fame Award to Edmond Hamilton was going to be presented here, sufficient time should not have been allotted to Sam Moskowitz to do a reasonable job of it. It was announced that he would have five minutes—but reading the inscription on the award alone would have taken that much.

The first result was that, in last-minute efforts to get sufficient time, which not only slowed things up, but made everyone involved look bad, the object—to give particular attention to a fine old-time author—was fudged beyond recognition. And the second result was disastrous. (I do not however, condone the facile expedient of making the Presenter of the Hall of Fame Award the sole goat of this error-filled game.)

By this time, Lester del Rey, who has appeared before audiences often enough to have developed fully a sense of awareness as to just how much a particular one can take under any present circumstances, realized that things had gone beyond the point of recall. The room had grown more uncomfortable and the audience was tired; while I myself was ready and willing to make the effort to hear and appreciate a respectably long speech, I could see that others around me, however willing, just were not able. So what Lester did, even though Chairman Ted White urged him to take as much time as he needed, was to throw his carefully prepared speech away, and present a summary of it—the conclusions, omitting the bulk of tight reasoning that had led up to them. It was well worth listening to, but nothing like what we had all come to hear.

What Was The Meaning Of The Strange Disappearances?

"You met someone with the same notions?" asked my colleague.

He shook his head. "No, not exactly the same, but it was a lot like it. He was a little under the weather, and I helped him to a bus.

"He claimed he saw people flying around the News and Chanin buildings. They didn't have any wings—they were just jumping up into the air, he said. He said he was walking along and he looked up suddenly and there they were leaping from one of the windows of the building—I forgot to ask him which. He was plenty scared, he says, but in an instant he saw that they weren't falling at all. They were soaring up, if you please . . . "

Don't Miss

LEAPERS

by Robert A. W. Lowndes

in the July issue of

MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

see page 125

You will find the full speech in this issue of *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION*, by which I mean, you will find the text of what Lester had intended to say. Had it been given, the actual speech would have shown differences, as a creative speaker allows for inspiration and last minute revisions even as he follows his text in general.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this is the first time that such a thing has happened at a World Science Fiction Convention. May it be the last!

UNDOUBTEDLY YOU HAVE noticed that the layout of our contents page has altered slightly; we did this in order to list the names of two veteran science fictionists whose talents and collections we are making use of; thus we welcome *Robert A. Madle* and *Sam Moskowitz* as Editorial Consultants. Perhaps you wonder why we do not call them "Assistant Editors", "Associate Editors" or "Contributing Editors".

The reason is that any of these three titles imply an exclusive relationship which simply does not apply in these instances. Neither Mr. Madle or Mr. Moskowitz is being employed by Health Knowledge, on any basis: an assistant editor works on salary; an associate editor is presumed to draw a fee of some sort, although he may not be on the payroll; the same might be said of a contributing editor—and this latter person is expected to appear in each issue of the magazine. But the fact is that neither of these two gentlemen have anything to do with editing *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION*, and

are thus innocent of anything which may displease you outside of material run under their signatures, and both maintain their independent position and can become involved with other science fiction magazines, etc., without arousing any ethical questions.

Both are in a position to give me valuable information and aid in obtaining copies of stories which I cannot otherwise lay my hands upon, as well as bring worthy tales I do not know of to my attention. Mr. Moskowitz has uncovered a number of such tales, and has done special introductions for them. Mr. Madle is handling the *First Fandom* department.

For those of you who are new to science fiction:

Robert A. Madle is an oldtime science fiction and fantasy enthusiast, who has published many issues of fan magazines (amateur) and written a great deal about earlier science fiction which was published in the regular science fiction magazines. He deals in back issues and out-of-print books, etc., and I have had occasion to purchase not a few of both from him, always finding his prices reasonable.

Sam Moskowitz has one of the largest collections of science fiction and fantasy in the country and, in recent years, has been specializing in magazines published prior to 1923 (when *WEIRD TALES* first appeared) which contained science fiction, weird tales, fantasy, etc. The number of such stories, written by well known authors of the day, and published in general circulation magazines with very

(Turn to Page 121)

Did You Miss Our Earlier Issues?

While They Last, Here Are The Contents

#1, Winter 1966/67: "The Girl in the Golden Atom", Ray Cummings; "The City of Singing Flame", Clark Ashton Smith; "Voice of Atlantis", Laurence Manning; "The Plague", George H. Smith; "The Question", J. Hunter Holly.

#2, Spring 1967: "The Moon Menace", Edmond Hamilton; "Dust", Wallace West; "The White City", David H. Keller, M.D.; "Ringhost", A. Bertram Chandler; "Seeds From Space", Laurence Manning.

#3, Summer 1967: "Beyond the Singing Flame", Clark Ashton Smith; "Disowned", Victor Endersby; "A Single Rose", Jon DeCles; "The Last American", J.A. Mitchell, "The Man Who Awoke", Laurence Manning.

#4, Fall 1967: "Master of the Brain", Laurence Manning; "Do Not Fold or Mutilate", William M. Danner; "The Last Shrine", Chester D. Cuthbert; "The Times We Had", Edward D. Hoch; "Master of the Octopus", Edward Ellin Weeks, "The City of Spiders", H. Warner Munn.

#5, Winter 1967/68: "The Pygmy Planet", Jack Williamson; "Destroyers", Greg D. Bear; "The City of Sleep", Laurence Manning; "Echo", William F. Temple; "Plane People", Wallace West.

Order From Page 128

DARK MOON

by CHARLES WILLARD DIFFIN

The catastrophe that attended Earth's acquisition of a new satellite ruined Walter Harkness—and opened up new doors beyond his wildest dreams!

The second issue of the new Clayton magazine, ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER-SCIENCE (February,1930) featured a long novelet, illustrated on the cover by Wesso, by CHARLES WILLARD DIFFIN a man whose name had not been seen in any of the older science fiction magazines. Was this his first professional acceptance? I have no evidence but the internal evidence of *Spawn Of The Stars* itself, and published statements by Editor *Harry Bates* to the effect that he sought science fiction from established pulp writers. This novelet reads like the work of a man who has had experience in writing pulp fiction, but is new to science fiction.

Diffin improved rapidly; his 4-part serial, *The Pirate Planet* was quite good, in the main (Nov., Dec. 1930; Jan., Feb. 1931), and then came this first novelet of a trilogy, bearing on the cover one of the most delightfully horrendous monsters yet seen on science fiction covers. This cover by Wesso did *not* depict a genuine bug-eyed monster (BEM), yet it is a monster bug, to use the general misapplied term that is slapped indiscriminately on insects and arachnids. A true BEM is a monster which either has eyes like an insect, or whose eyes "bug out", as it were—and, to correct Lin Carter, *you never saw them in the old days when Hugo Gernsback had science fiction magazines.* The Gernsback Era ended in Feb. ruary 1936, when the final issue of his *WONDER STORIES* appeared. BEMS made their debut on the successor magazine, *THRILLING WONDER STORIES.*

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Above them, and thirty feet away on a rocky ledge was a thing of horror.

THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-NINTH FLOOR of the great Transportation Building allowed one standing at a window to look down upon the roofs of the countless buildings that were New York. Flat-decked, all of them were places of hangars and machine shops and strange aircraft, large and small, that rose vertically under the lift of flashing helicopters.

The air was alive and vibrant with directed streams of stubby-winged shapes that drove swiftly on their way, with only a wisp of vapor from their funnel-shaped sterns to mark the continuous explosion that propelled them. Here and there were those that entered a shaft of pale-blue light

that somehow outshone the sun. It marked an ascending area, and there ships canted swiftly, swung their blunt noses upward, and vanished to the upper levels.

A mile and more away, in a great shaft of green light from which all other craft kept clear, a tremendous shape was dropping. Her hull of silver was striped with a broad red band; her multiple helicopters were dazzling flashes in the sunlight. The countless dots that were portholes and the larger observation ports must have held numberless eager faces, for the Oriental Express served a cosmopolitan passenger list.

But Walter Harkness, standing at the window, stared out from troubled, frowning eyes that saw nothing of the kaleidoscopic scene. His back was turned to the group of people in the room, and he had no thought of wonders that were prosaic, nor of passengers, eager or blase; his thoughts were only of freight and of the acres of flat roofs far in the distance where alternate flashes of color marked the descending area for fast freighters of the air. And in his mind he could see what his eyes could not discern—the markings on those roofs that were enormous landing fields: Harkness Terminals, New York.

Only twenty-four, Walt Harkness—owner now of Harkness, Incorporated—had dark hair that curled slightly as it left his forehead; eyes that were taking on the intent, straightforward look that had been his father's and that went straight to the heart of a business proposal with disconcerting directness. But the lips were not set in the hard lines that had marked Harkness Senior; they could still curve into boyish pleasure to mark the enthusiasm that was his.

He was not typically the man of business in his dress. His broad shoulders seemed slender in the loose blouse of blue silk; a narrow scarf of brilliant color was loosely tied; the close, full-length cream-colored trousers were supported by a belt of woven metal, while his shoes were of the coarse-mesh fabric that the latest mode demanded.

He turned now at the sound of Warrington's voice. E. B. Warrington, Counsellor at Law, was the name that glowed softly on the door of this spacious office, and Warrington's gray head was nodding as he dated and indexed a document.

"June twentieth, nineteen seventy-three," he repeated; "a lucky day for you, Walter. Inside of ten years this land will be worth double the fifty million you are paying—and it is worth more than that to you."

He turned and handed a document to a heavy-bodied man across from him. "Here is your copy, Herr Schwartzmann," he said. The man

pocketed the paper with a smile of satisfaction thinly concealed on his dark face.

Harkness did not reply. He found little pleasure in the look on Schwartzmann's face, and his glance passed on to a fourth man who sat quietly at one side of the room.

Young, his tanned face made bronze by contrast with his close-curling blond hair, there was no need of the emblem on his blouse to mark him as of the flying service. Beside the spread wings was the triple star of a master-pilot of the world; it carried Chet Bullard past all Earth's air patrols and gave him the freedom of every level.

Beside him a girl was seated. She rose quickly now and came toward Harkness with outstretched hand. And Harkness found time in the instant of her coming to admire her grace of movement, and the carriage that was almost stately.

The mannish attire of a woman of business seemed almost a discordant note; he did not realize that the hard simplicity of her costume had been saved by the soft warmth of its color, and by an indefinable, flowing line in the jacket above the rippling folds of an undergarment that gathered smoothly at her knees. He knew only that she made a lovely picture, surprisingly appealing, and that her smile was a compensation for the less pleasing visage of her companion, Schwartzmann.

"Mademoiselle Vernier," Herr Schwartzmann had introduced her when they came. And he had used her given name as he added: "Mademoiselle Diane is somewhat interested in our projects."

She was echoing Warrington's words as she took Harkness' hand in a friendly grasp. "I hope, indeed, that it is the lucky day for you, Monsieur. Our modern transportation—it is so marvelous, and I know so little of it. But I am learning. I shall think of you as developing your so-splendid properties wonderfully."

Only when she and Schwartzmann were gone did Harkness answer his counsellor's remark. The steady Harkness eyes were again wrinkled about with puckering lines; the shoulders seemed not so square as usual.

"Lucky?" he said. "I hope you're right. You were Father's attorney for twenty years—your judgment ought to be good; and mine is not entirely worthless.

"Yes, it is a good deal we have made—of course it is!—it bears every analysis. We need that land if we are to expand as we must, and the banks will carry me for the twenty million I can't swing. But, confound it, Warrington, I've had a hunch—I've gone against it. Schwartzmann has tied me up for ready cash, and he represents the

biggest competitors we have. They're planning something—but we need the land . . . Oh, well, I've signed up; the property is mine; but . . . "

The counsellor laughed. "You need a change," he said; "I never knew you to worry before. Why don't you jump on the China Mail this afternoon; it connects with a good line out of Shanghai. You can be tramping around the Himalayas tomorrow. A day or two there will fix you up."

"Too busy," said Harkness. "Our experimental ship is about ready, so I'll go and play with that. We'll be shooting at the moon one of these days."

"The moon!" the other snorted. "Crazy dreams! McInness tried it, and you know what happened. He came back out of control—couldn't check his speed against the repelling area—shot through and stripped his helicopters off against the heavy air. And that other fellow, Haldgren—"

"Yes," said Harkness quietly, "Haldgren—he didn't fall back. He went on into space."

"Impossible!" the counsellor objected. "He must have fallen unobserved. No, no, Walter; be reasonable. I do not claim to know much about those things—I leave them to the Stratosphere Control Board—but I do know this much: that the lifting effect above the repelling area—what used to be known as the heaviside layer—counteracts gravity's pull. That's why our ships fly as they please when they have shot themselves through. But they have to fly close to it; its force is dissipated in another ten thousand feet, and old Earth's pull is still at work. It can't be done, my boy; the vast reaches of space—"

"Are the next to be conquered," Harkness broke in. "And Chet and I intend to be in on it." He glanced toward the young flyer, and they exchanged a quiet smile.

"Remember how my father was laughed at when he dared to vision the commerce of today? Crazy dreams, Warrington? That's what they said when Dad built the first unit of our plant, the landing stages for the big freighters, the docks for ocean ships while they lasted, the berths for the big submarines that he knew were coming. They jeered at him then. 'Harkness' Folly,' the first plant was called. And now—well you know what we are doing."

He laughed softly. "Leave us our crazy dreams, Warrington," he protested; "sometimes those dreams come true . . . And I'll try to forget my hunch. We've bought the property; now we'll make it earn money

for us. I'll forget it now, and work on my new ship. Chet and I are about ready for a try-out."

The flyer had risen to join him, and the two turned together to the door where a private lift gave access to the roof. They were halfway to it when the first shock came to throw the two men onto the floor.

The great framework of the Transportation Building was swaying wildly as they fell, and the groaning of its wrenched and straining members sounded through the echoing din as every movable object in the room came crashing down.

Dazed for the moment, Harkness lay prone, while his eyes saw the nitron illuminator, like a great chandelier, swing widely from the ceiling where it was placed. Its crushing weight started toward him, but a last swing shot it past to the desk of the counsellor.

Harkness got slowly to his feet. The flyer, too, was able to stand, though he felt tenderly of a bruised shoulder. But where Warrington had been was only the crumpled wreckage bulk of the illuminator upon the spot, and, beneath, the mangled remains where flowing blood made a quick pool upon the polished floor.

Warrington was dead—no help could be rendered there—and Harkness was reaching for the door. The shock had passed, and the building was quiet, but he shouted to the flyer and sprang into the lift.

"The air is the place for us," he said; "there may be more coming." He jammed over the control lever, and the little lift moved.

"What was it?" gasped Bullard, "earthquake?—explosion? Lord, what a smash!"

Harkness made no reply. He was stepping out upon the broad surface of the Transportation Building. He paid no attention to the hurrying figures about him, nor did he hear the loud shouting of the newscasting cone that was already bringing reports of the disaster. He had thought only for the speedy little ship that he used for his daily travel.

The golden cylinder was still safe in the grip of its hold-down clutch, and its stubby wings and gleaming sextuple-bladed helicopter were intact. Harkness sprang for the control-board.

He, too, wore an emblem: a silver circle that marked him a pilot of the second class; he could take his ship around the world below the forty level, though at forty thousand and above he must give over control to the younger man.

The hiss of the releasing clutch came softly to him as the free-signal flashed, and he sank back with a great sigh of relief as the motors hummed and the blades above leaped into action. Then the stern blast

roared, though its sound came faintly through the deadened walls, and he sent the little speedster for the pale blue light of an ascending area. Nor did he level off until the gauge before him said twenty thousand.

His first thought had been for their own safety in the air, but with it was a frantic desire to reach the great plant of the Harkness Terminals. What had happened there? Had there been any damage? Had they felt the shock? A few seconds in level twenty would tell him. He reached the place of alternate flashes where he could descend, and the little ship fell smoothly down.

Below him the great expanse of buildings took form, and they seemed safe and intact. His intention was to land, till the slim hands of Chet Bullard thrust him roughly aside and reached for the controls.

It was Bullard's right—a master pilot could take control at any time—but Harkness stared in amazement as the other lifted the ship, then swung it out over the expanse of ocean beyond—stared until his own eyes followed those of Chet Bullard to see the wall of water that was sweeping toward the land.

Chet, he knew, had held them in a free-space level, where they could maneuver as they pleased, but he knew, too, that the pilot's hands were touching levers that swung them at a quite unlawful speed past other ships, and that swept them down in a great curve above the ocean's broad expanse.

Harkness did not at once grasp the meaning of the thing. There was the water, sparkling clear, and a monstrous wave that lifted itself up to mountainous heights. Behind it the ocean's blue became a sea of mud; and only when he glanced at their ground-speed detector did he sense that the watery mountain was hurling itself upon the shore with the swiftness of a great super-liner.

There were the out-thrusting capes that made a safe harbor for the commerce that came on and beneath the waters to the Harkness Terminals; the wave built itself up to still greater heights as it came between them. They were riding above it by a thousand feet, and Walter Harkness, in sudden knowledge of what this meant, stared with straining eyes at the wild thing that raced with them underneath.

He must do something—anything!—to check the monster, to flatten out the onrushing mountain! The red bottom-plates of a submarine freighter came rolling up behind the surge to show how futile was the might of man. And the next moment marked the impact of the wall of water upon a widespread area of landing roofs, where giant letters stared

mockingly at him to spell the words: Harkness Terminals, New York.

He saw the silent crumbling of great buildings; he glimpsed in one wild second the whirling helicopters on giant freighters that took the air too late; he saw them vanish as the sea swept in and engulfed them. And then, after endless minutes, he knew that Chet had swung again above the site of his plant, and he saw the stumps of steel and twisted wreckage that remained . . .

The pilot hung the ship in air—a golden beetle, softly humming as it hovered above the desolate scene. Chet had switched on the steady buzz of the stationary-ship signal, and the wireless warning was swinging passing craft out and around their station. Within the quiet cabin a man stood to stare and stare, unspeaking, until his pilot laid a friendly hand upon the broad shoulders.

"You're cleaned," said Chet Bullard. "It's a washout! But you'll build it up again; they can't stop you—"

But the steady, appraising eyes of Walter Harkness had moved on and on to a rippling stretch of water where land had been before.

"Cleaned," he responded tonelessly; "and then some!" He paused to point to the stretch of new sea, and his lips moved that he might laugh long and harshly. "But right there is all I own—that is, the land I bought this morning. It is gone, and I owe twenty million to the hardest-hearted bunch of creditors in the world. That crowd who've been planning to invade our territory here—you know what chance I'll have with them . . ."

The disaster was complete, and Walter Harkness was facing it—facing it with steady gray eyes and a mind that was casting a true balance of accounts. He was through, he told himself; his other holdings would be seized to pay for this waste of water that an hour before had been dry land; they would strip him of his last dollar. His lips curved into a sardonic smile.

"June twentieth, nineteen seventy-three," he repeated. "Poor old Warrington! He called this my lucky day!"

The pilot had respected the other man's need of silence, but his curiosity could not be longer restrained.

"What's back of it all?" he demanded. "What caused it?" The shock was like no earthquake I've ever known. And this tidal wave—" He was reaching for a small switch. He turned a dial to the words: "News Service—General," and the instrument broke into hurried speech.

It told of earth shocks in many places—the whole world had felt it

-some tremendous readjustment among the inner stresses of Earth —most serious on the Atlantic seaboard—the great Harkness Terminals destroyed—some older buildings in the business district shaken down—loss of life not yet computed . . .

"But what did it?" Chet Bullard was repeating in the cabin of their floating ship. "A tremendous shake-up like that!" Harkness silenced him with a quick gesture of his hand. Another voice had broken in to answer the pilot's question.

"The mystery is solved," said the new voice. "This is the Radio-News representative speaking from Calcutta. We are in communication with the Allied Observatories on Mount Everest. At eleven P. M., World Standard Time, Professor Boyle observed a dark body in transit across the moon. According to Boyle, a non-luminous and non-reflecting asteroid has crashed into Earth's gravitational field. A dark moon has joined this celestrial grouping, and is now swinging in an orbit about Earth. It is this that has disturbed the balance of internal stresses within Earth—"

"A dark moon!" Chet Bullard broke in, but again a movement from Harkness silenced his exclamations. Whatever of dull apathy had gripped young Harkness was gone; he had no thought now of the devastation below them that spelled his financial ruin. Some greater, more gripping idea had now possessed him. The instrument was still speaking:

"—without light of its own, nor does it reflect the sun's light as does our own moon. This phenomenon, as yet, is unexplained. It is nearer than our own moon and smaller, but of tremendous density." Harkness nodded his head quickly at that, and his eyes were alive with an inner enthusiasm not yet expressed in words. "It is believed that the worst is over. More minor shocks may follow, but the cause is known; the mystery is solved. Out from the velvet dark of space has come a small, new world to join us—"

The voice ceased. Walter Harkness had opened the switch.

"The mystery is solved," Chet Bullard repeated.

"Solved?" exclaimed the other from his place at the controls. "Man, it is only begun!" He depressed a lever, and a muffled roar marked their passage to a distant shaft of blue, where he turned the ship on end and shot like a giant shell for the higher air.

There was northbound travel at thirty-five, and northward Harkness would go, but he shot straight up. At forty thousand he motioned the master-pilot to take over the helm.

"Clear through," he ordered; "up into the liner lanes; then north for our own shop." Nor did he satisfy the curiosity in Chet Bullard's eyes

by so much as a word until some hours later when they floated down.

An icy waste was beneath them, where the sub-polar regions were wrapped in the mantle of their endless winter. Here ships never passed. Northward, toward the Pole, were liner lanes in the higher levels, but here was a deserted sector. And here Walter Harkness had elected to carry on his experiments.

A rise of land showed gaunt and black, and the pilot was guiding the ship in a long slant upon it. He landed softly beside a building in a sheltered, snow-filled valley.

Harkness shivered as he stepped from the warmth of their insulated cabin, and he fumbled with shaking fingers to touch the combination upon the locked door. It swung open, to close behind the men as they stood in the warm, brightly-lighted room.

Nitro illuminators were hung from the ceiling, their diffused brilliance shining down to reflect in sparkling curves and ribbons of light from a silvery shape. It stood upon the floor, a metal cylinder a hundred feet in length, whose blunt ends showed dark openings of gaping ports. There were other open ports above and below and in regular spacing about the rounded sides. No helicopters swung their blades above; there were only the bulge of a conning tower and the heavy inset glasses of the lookouts. Nor were there wings of any kind. It might have been a projectile for some mammoth gun.

Harkness stood in silence before it, until he turned to smile at the still-wondering pilot.

"Chet," he said, "it's about finished and ready—just in time. We've built it, you and I; freighted in the parts ourselves and assembled every piece. we've even built the shop: lucky the big steeloid plates are so easily handled. And you and I are the only ones that know.

"Every ship in the airlanes of the world is driven by detonite—and we have evolved a super-detonite. We have proved that it will work. It will carry us beyond the pull of gravitation; it will give us the freedom of outer space. It is ours and and ours alone."

"No," the other corrected slowly, "it is yours. You have paid the bills and you have paid me. Paid me well."

"I'm paying no more," Harkness told him. "I'm broke, right this minute. I haven't a dollar—and yet I say now that poor Warrington was right: this is my lucky day."

He laughed aloud at the bewilderment on the pilot's face.

Chet," he said slowly, and his voice was pitched to a more serious tone, "out there is a new world, the Dark Moon. 'Tremendous density,'

they said. That means it can hold an atmosphere of its own. It means new metals, new wealth. It means a new little world to explore, and it's out there waiting for us. Waiting for *us;* we will be the first. For here is the ship that will take us.

"It isn't mine, Chet; it's ours. And the adventure is ours; yours and mine, both. We only meant to go a few hundred miles at first, but here's something big. We may never come back—it's a long chance that we're taking—but you're in on it, if you want to go . . . "

He paused. The expression in the eyes of Chet Bullard, master-pilot of the world, was answer enough. But Chet amplified it with explosive words.

"Am I in on it?" he demanded. "Try to count me out—just try to do it! I was game for a trial flight out beyond. And now, with a real objective to shoot at—a new world—"

His words failed him. Walt Harkness knew that the hand the other extended was thrust forth blindly; he gripped at it hard, while he turned to look at the shining ship.

But his inner gaze passed far beyond the gleaming thing of metal, out into a realm of perpetual night. Out there a new world was waiting —a Dark Moon! —and there they might find . . . But his imagination failed him there; he could only thrill with the adventure that the unknown held.

II

TWO DAYS, WHILE A COLD SUN peeped above an icy horizon! Two days of driving, eager work on the installation of massive motors—yet motors so light that one man could lift them—then Harkness prepared to leave.

"Wealth brings care when it comes," he told Chet, "but it leaves plenty of trouble behind it when it goes. I must get back to New York and throw what is left of my holdings to the wolves; they must be howling by this time to find out where I am. I'll drop back here in a week."

There were instuments to be installed, and Chet would look after that. He would test the motors where the continuous explosion of superdetonite would furnish the terrific force for their driving power. Then the exhaust from each port must be measured and thrusts equalized, where needed, by adjustment of great valves. All this Chet would finish. And then—a test flight. Harkness hoped to be back for the first tryout of the new ship.

"I'll be seeing you in a week," he repeated. "You'll be that long getting her tuned up."

But Chet Bullard grinned derisively. "Two days!" he replied. "You'll have to step some if you get in on the trial flight. But don't worry: I won't take off for the Dark Moon. I'll just go up and play around above the liner lanes and see how the old girl stunts."

Harkness nodded. "Watch for patrol ships," he warned. "There's no traffic directly over here—that's one reason why I chose this spot—but don't let anyone get too close. Our patents have not been applied for."

Harkness spent a day in New York. Then a night trip by Highline Express took him to London where he busied himself for some hours. Next, a fast passenger plane for Vienna.

In other days Walter Harkness would have chartered a private ship to cut off a few precious hours, but he was traveling more economically now. And the representatives of his foreign competitors were not now coming to see him: he must go to them.

At the great terminal in Vienna a man approached him. "Herr Harkness?" he inquired, and saluted stiffly.

He was not in uniform. He was not of the Allied Patrol nor of any branch of the police force that encircled the world in its operations; yet his military bearing was unmistakable. To Harkness it was reminiscent of old pictures of Prussian days—those curious pictures revived at times for the amusement of those who turned to their television sets for entertainment. He had to repress a smile as he followed where the other led him to a gray speedster in a distant corner of the open concourse.

He stepped within a luxurious cabin and would have gone on into the little control room, but his guide checked him. Harkness was mildly curious as to their course—Schwartzmann was to have seen him in Vienna—but the way to the instrument board was barred. Another precise salute, and he was motioned to the cabin at the rear.

"It is orders that I follow," he was told. And Walter Harkness complied.

"It could happen only here," he told himself. And he found himself exasperated by a people who were slow to conform to the customs of a world whose closely-knit commerce had obliterated the narrow nationalism of the past.

They landed in an open court surrounded by wide lawns. He glimpsed trees about them in the dusk, and looming before him was an oldtime building of the chateau type set off in this private park. He would have followed his guide toward the entrance, but a flash of color checked him.

Like a streak of flame a ship shot in above them; hung poised near the one that had brought them and settled to rest beside it. A little red speedster, it made a splash of crimson against the green lawns beyond. And, "Nice flying," Harkness was telling himself.

The hold-down clamps had hardly gripped it when a figure sprang out from an opened door. A figure in cool gray that took warmth and color from the ship beyond—a figure of a girl, tall and slender and graceful as she came impulsively toward him.

"Monsieur Harkness!" she exclaimed. "But this is a surprise. I thought that Herr Schwartzmann was to see you in Vienna!" For a brief moment Harkness saw a flicker of puzzled wonderment in her eyes.

"And I am sorry," she went on, "—so very sorry for your misfortune. But we will be generous."

She withdrew her hand which Harkness was holding. He was still phrasing a conventional greeting as she flung him a gay laugh and a look from brown eyes that smiled encouragement. She was gone before he found words for reply.

Walter Harkness had been brought up in a world of business, and knew little of the subtle message of a woman's eyes. But he felt within him a warm response to the friendly companionship that the glance implied.

Within the chateau, in a dark-paneled room, Herr Schwartzmann was waiting. He motioned Harkness to a chair and resumed his complacent contemplation of a picture that was flowing across a screen. Color photography gave every changing shade. It was coming by wireless, as Harkness knew, and he realized that the sending instrument must be in a ship that cruised slowly above a scene of wreckage and desolation.

He recognized the ruins of his great plant; he saw the tiny figures of men, and he knew that the salvage company he had placed in charge was on the job. Beyond a stretch of rippling water where the great wave had boiled over miles of land and had sucked it back to the ocean's depths. And he realized that the beginning of his conference was not auspicious.

After the warmth of the girl's greeting, this other was like a plunge into the Arctic chill of his northern retreat.

"I have listed every dollar's worth of property that I own," he was saying an hour later, "and I have turned it over to a trustee who will protect your rights. What more do you want?"

"We have heard of some experimental work," said Schwartzmann smoothly. "A new ship; some radical changes in design. We would like that also."

"Try and get it," Harkness invited.

The other passed that challenge by. "There is another alternative," he said. "My principals in France are unknown to you; perhaps, also, it is not known that they intend to extend their lines to New York and that they will erect great terminals to do the work that you have done.

"Your father was the pioneer; there is great value in the name of Harkness—the 'good-will' as you say in America. We would like to adopt that name, and carry on where you have left off. If you were to assign to us the worthless remains of your plant, and all right and title to the name of Harkness Terminals, it might be—" He paused deliberately while Harkness stiffened in his chair. "It might be that we would require no further settlement. The balance of your fortune—and your ship—will be yours."

Harkness' gray eyes, for a moment, betrayed the smouldering rage that was his.

"Put it in plain words," he demanded. "You would bribe me to sell you something you cannot create for yourselves. The name of Harkness has stood for fair-dealing, for honor, for scrupulous observance of our clients' rights. My father established it on the that basis and I have continued in the same way. And you?—well, it occurs to me that the Schwartzmann interests have had a different reputation. Now you would buy my father's name to use it as a cloak for your dirty work!"

He rose abruptly. "It is not for sale. Every dollar that I own will be used to settle my debt. There will be enough—"

Herr Schwartzmann refused to be insulted. His voice was unruffled as he interrupted young Harkness' vehement statement.

"Perhaps you are right; perhaps not. Permit me to remind you that the value of your holdings may depreciate under certain influences that we are able to exert—also that you are in Austria, and that the laws of this country permit us to hold you imprisoned until the debt is paid. In the meantime we will find your ship and seize it, and whatever it has of value will be protected by patents in our name."

His voice became harsh. "You Americans who will not realize that business is business!"

Harkness was standing, drawn unconsciously to his full height. He looked down upon the other man. All anger had gone from his face; he seemed only appraising the individual before him.

"The trouble with you," he said, " is that you are living in the past —way back about nineteen fourteen, when might made right—sometimes."

He continued to look squarely into the other's eyes, but his lips set firmly, and his voice was hard and decisive.

"But," he continued, "I am not here to educate you, nor to deal with you. Any further negotiations will be through my counsellors. And now I will trouble you to return me to the city. We are through with this."

Schwartzmann's heavy face drew into lines of sardonic humor. "Not quite through," he said; "and you are not returning to the city." He drew a paper from his desk.

"I anticipated some such *verdammpt* foolishness from you. You see this? It is a contract; a release, a transfer of all your interests in Harkness, Incorporated. It needs only your signature, and that will be supplied. No one will question it when we are done: the very ink in the stylus you carry will be duplicated. For the last time, I repeat my offer; I am patient with you. Sign this, and keep all else that you have. Refuse, and—"

"Yes?" Harkness inquired.

"And we will never be detected. And as for you, your body will be found—a suicide! You will leave a letter: we will attend to all that. Herr Harkness will have found this misfortune unbearable . . . We shall be very sad!" His heavy smile grew into derisive laughter.

"I am still patient, and kind," he added. "I give you twenty-four hours to think it over."

A touch of a button on his desk summoned the man who had brought Harkness there. "Herr Harkness is in your charge," were the instructions to the one who stood stiffly at attention. "He is not to leave this place. Is it understood?"

As he was ushered from the room, Walter Harkness also understood, and he knew that this was no idle threat. He had heard ugly rumors of Schwartzmann and his methods. One man, he knew, had dared to oppose him—and that man had gone suddenly insane. A touch of a needle, it was whispered . . .

There had been other rumors; Schwartzmann got what he wanted; his financial backing was enormous. And now he would bring his methods to America; but there he needed the Harkness standing, the reputation for probity—and Walter Harkness was grimly resolved that they should never buy it from him. But the problem must be faced, and the answer

found, if answer there was, in twenty-four hours.

An amazing state of affairs in a modern world! He stood meditating upon his situation in a great, high-ceilinged room. A bed stood in a corner, and other furniture marked the room as belonging to an earlier time. Even mechanical weather-control was wanting; one must open the windows, Harkness found, to get the cooling air.

He stood at the open window and saw storm clouds blowing up swiftly. They blotted the stars from the night sky; they swept black and ominous overhead, and seemed to touch the giant trees what whipped their branches in the wind. But he was thinking not at all of the storm, and only of the fact that this room where he stood must be directly above the one where Schwartzmann was seated. Schwartzmann—who would put an end to his life as casually as he would bring down a squirrel from one of those trees!

And again he thought: "Twenty-four hours! . . . Why hours? Why not minutes?" . . . Whatever must be done he must do now.

A wind-tossed branch lashed at him. On the ground below he saw the man who had brought him, posting another as a guard. They glanced up at his window. There would be no escape there.

And yet the branch seemed beckoning. He caught it when again it whipped toward him, and, without any definite plan, he lashed it fast with a velvet cord from the window drapes.

But his thoughts came back to the room. He snatched suddenly at the covers of the bed. What were the sheets?—fabric as old-fashioned as the room, or were they cellulex? The touch of the soft fabric reassured him: it was as soft as though woven of spider's web, and strong as fibres of steel.

It took all of all his strength to rip it into strips, but it was a matter of minutes, only, until he had a rope that would bear his weight. The storm had broken; the black clouds let loose a deluge of water that drove in at the window. If only the window below was still open!

He found the middle of his rope, looped it over a post of the bed, and, with both strands in his grasp, let himself out and over the dripping sill.

Would the guard see him, or had he taken to shelter? Harkness did not pause to look. He left the branch tied fast. "A squirrel in a tree," he thought: the branch would mislead them. His feet found the window-sill one story below. He drew himself into the room and let loose of one strand of his rope as he entered.

Schwartzman was gone. Harkness, with the bundle of wet fabric in his hands, glanced quickly about. A door stood open—it was a closet—and

the rain-drenched man was hidden there an instant later. But he stepped most carefully across the floor and touched his wet shoes only to the rugs where their print was lost. And he held himself breathlessly silent as he heard the volley of gutteral curses that marked the return of Herr Schwartzmann some minutes later.

"Imbecile!" Schwartzmann shouted above the crash of the closing window. "*Dumkopff!* You have let him escape.

"Give me your pistol!" Harkness glimpsed the figure of his recent guard. "Get another for yourself—find him!—shoot him down! A little lead and detonite will end his foolishness!"

From his hiding place Harkness saw the bulky figure of Schwartzmann, who made as if to follow where the other man had gone. The pistol was in his hand. Walt Harkness knew all too well what that meant. The tiny grain of detonite in the end of each leaden ball was the same terrible explosive that drove their ships: it would tear him to pieces. And he had to get this man.

He was tensed for a spring as Schwartzmann paused. From the wall beyond him a red light was flashing; a crystal flamed forth with the intense glare of a thousand fires. It checked the curses on the other's thick lips; it froze Harkness to a rigid statue in the darkness of his little room.

An emergency flash broadcast over the world! It meant that the News Service had been commandeered this flashing signal was calling to the peoples of Earth!

What catastrophe did this herald? Had it to do with the Dark Moon? Not since the uprising of the Molemen, those creatures who had spewed forth from the inner world, had the fiery crystall called! . . . It seemed to Harkness that Schwartzmann was hours in reaching the switch . . . A voice came shouting into the room:

"By order of the Stratosphere Control Board," it commanded, "all traffic is forbidden above the forty level. Liners take warning. Descend at once.

Over and over it repeated the command—an order whose authority could not be disregarded. In his inner vision Harkness saw the tumult in the skies, the swift dropping of huge liners and great carriers of fast freight, the scurrying of other craft to give clearance to these monsters whose terrific speed must be slowly checked. But why? What had happened? What could warrant such disruption of the traffic of the world? His tensed muscles were aching unheeded; his sense of feeling seemed lost, so intently was he waiting for some further word.

"Emergency news report," said another voice, and Harkness strained every faculty to hear. "Highline ships attacked by unknown foe. Three passenger carriers of the Northpolar Short Line reported crashed. Incomplete warnings from their commanders indicate they were attacked. Patrol ship has spotted one crash. They have landed beside it and are reporting . . .

"The report is in; it is almost beyond belief. They say the liner is empty, that no human body, alive or dead, is in the ship. She was stripped of crew and passengers in the air.

"We await confirmation. Danger apparently centered over arctic regions, but traffic has been ordered from all upper levels—"

The voice that had been held rigidly to the usual calm clarity of an official announcer became suddenly high-pitched and vibrant. "Stand by!" it shouted. "An S. O. S is coming in. We will put it through our amplifiers; give it to you direct!"

The newscaster crackled and hissed: they were waiving all technical niceties at R. N. Headquarters, Harkness knew. The next voice came clearly, though a trifle faint.

"Air Patrol! Help! Position eighty-two—fourteen north, ninety-three—twenty east—Superliner Number 87-G, flying at R. A. plus seven. We are attacked!—Air Patrol!—Air Patrol!—Eighty-two—fourteen north, ninety-three—twenty—"

The voice that was repeating the position was lost in a pandemonium of cries. Then—

"Monsters!" the voice was shouting. "They have seized the ship! They are tearing at our ports—" A hissing crash ended in silence . . .

"Tearing at our ports!" Harkness was filled with a blinding nausea as he sensed what had come with the crash. The opening ports—the outrush of air released to the thin atmosphere of those upper levels! Earth pressure within the cabins of the ship; them in an instant—none! Every man, every woman and child on the giant craft, had died.

The announcer had resumed, but above the sound was a guttural voice that shouted hoarsely in accents of dismay. "Eighty-seven-G!" Schwartzmann was exclaiming, "—*Mein Gott!* It is our own ship, the *Alaskan!* Our crack flyer!"

Harkness heard him but an instant, for another thought was hammering at his brain. The position!—the ship's position!—it was almost above his experimental plant! And Chet was there, and the ship . . . What had Chet said? He would fly it in two days—and this was the

second day! Chet had no radio-news; no instrument had depended upon the one in Harkness' own ship. And now—

Walt Harkness' clear understanding had brought a vision that was sickening, so plainly had he glimpsed the scene of terror in that distant cabin. And now he saw with equal clarity another picture. There was Chet, smiling, unafraid, proud of their joint accomplishment and of the gleaming metal shape that he was lifting carefully from its bed. He was floating it out to the open air; he was taking off, and up—up where some horror awaited.

"Monsters!" that thin voice had cried in a tone that was vibrant with terror. What could it be? —great ships out of space?—an invasion? Or beasts? . . But Harkness' vision failed him there. He knew only that a fast ship was moored just outside. He had planned vaguely to seize it; but he needed it a thousand times more desperately now. Chet might have been delayed, and he must warn him . . . the thoughts were flashing like hot sparks through his brain as he leaped.

He bore the heavier body of Schwartzmann to the floor. He rained smashing blows upon him with a furious frenzy that would not be curbed. The weapon with its deadly detonite bullet came toward him. In the same burst of fury he tore the weapon from the hand that held it; then sprang to his feet to stand wild-eyed and panting as he aimed the pistol at the cursing man and dragged him to his feet.

"The ship!" he said between heavy breaths, "—the ship! Take me to it! You will tell anyone we meet it is all right. One word of alarm, one wrong look, and I'll blow you to hell and make a break for it!"

The pistol under Harkness' silken jacket was pressed firmly into Schwartzmann's side; it brought them safely past excited guards and out into the storm; it held steady until the men had fought their way through blasts of rain to the side of the anchored ship. Not till then did Schwartzmann speak.

"Wait," he said. "Are you crazy, Harkness? You can never take off; the trees are close; a straight ascent is needed. And the wind—!"

He struggled in the other's grasp as Harkness swung open the cabin door, his fear of what seemed a certain death overmastering his fear of the weapon. He was shouting for help as Harkness threw him roughly aside and leaped into the ship.

Outside Harkness saw running figures as he threw on the motors. A pistol's flash came sharply through the storm and dark. A window in the chateau flashed into brilliance to frame the figure of a girl. Tall

and slender, she leaned forward with outstretched arms. She seemed calling to him.

Harkness seized the controls, and knew as he did so that Schwartzmann was right: he could never lift the ship in straight ascent. Before her whirling fans could raise her they would be crushed among the trees.

But there were two helicopters—dual lift, one forward and one aft. And Walt Harkness, pilot of the second class, earned immediate disbarment or a much higher rating as he coolly fingered the controls. He cut the motor on the big fan at the stern, threw the forward one on full and set the blades for maximum lift, then released the hold-down grips that moored her.

The grips let go with a crashing of metal arms. The bow shot upward while a blast of wind tore at the stubby wings. The slim ship tried to stand erect. Another furious, beating wind lifted her bodily, as Harkness, clinging desperately within the narrow room, threw his full weight upon the lever that he held.

The full blast of a detonite motor, on even a small ship, is terrific, and the speedster of Herr Schwartzmann did not lack for power. Small wonder that the rules of the Board of Control prohibit the use of the stern blast under one thousand feet.

The roaring inferno from the stern must have torn the ground as if by a mammoth plow; the figures of men must have scattered like leaves in a gusty wind. The ship itself was racked and shuddering with the impact of the battering thrust, but it rose like a rocket, though canted on one wing, and the crashing branches of wind-torn trees marked its passage on a long, curving slant that bent upward into the dark. Within the control room Walter Harkness grinned happily as he drew his bruised body from the place where he had been thrown, and brought the ship to an even keel.

Nice work! But there was other work ahead, and the smile of satisfaction soon passed. He held the nose up, and the wireless warning went out before as the wild climb kept on.

Forty thousand was passed; then fifty and more; a hundred thousand; and at length he was through the repelling area, that zone of mysterious force, above which was a magnetic repulsion nearly neutralizing gravity. He could fly level now; every unit of force could be used for forward flight to hurl him onward faster and faster into the night.

Harkness was flying where his license was void; he was flying, too, where all aircraft was banned. But the rules of the Board of Control

meant nothing to him this night. Nor did the voluble and sulphurous orders to halt that a patrol-ship flashed north. The patrol-ship was on station; she was lost far astern before she could gather speed for pursuit.

Walter Harkness had caught his position upon a small chart. It was a sphere, and he led a thin wire from the point that was Vienna to a dot that he marked on the sub-polar waste. He dropped a slender pointer upon the wire and engaged its grooved tip, and then the flying was out of his hands. The instrument before him, with its light bulbs and swift moving discs, would count their speed of passage; it would hold the ship steadily upon an unerring course and allow for drift of winds. The great-circle course was simple; the point he marked was drawing them as if it had been a magnet—drawing them as it drew the eyes of Walt Harkness, staring strainingly ahead as if to span the thousands of miles of dark.

III

THE CONTROL ROOM WAS GLASSED IN on all sides. The thick triple lenses were free from clouding, and the glasses between then kept out the biting cold of the heights. The glass was strong, to hold the pressure of one atmosphere that was maintained within the ship. The lookouts gave free vision in all directions except directly below the hull, and a series of mirrors corrected this defect.

But Walt Harkness had eyes solely for the black void ahead. Only the brilliant stars shone now in the mantle of velvety night. No flashing lights denoted the passing of liners, for they were safe in the harbor of the lower levels. He moved the controls once to avoid the green glare of an ascending area, then he knew that there were no ships to fear, and let the automatic control put him back on his course.

Before him, under a hooded light, was a heavy lens. It showed in magnification a portion of the globe. There were countries and seas on a vari-colored map, and one pin-point of brilliance that marked his ever-changing position.

He watched the slow movement of the glowing point. The central Federated States of Europe were behind him; the point was tracing a course over the vast reaches of the patchwork map that meant the many democracies of Russia. This cruiser of Schwartzmann's was doing five hundred miles an hour—and the watching man cursed under his breath at the slow progress of the tiny light.

But the light moved, and the slow hours passed, while Harkness tried to find consolation in surmises he told himself must be true.

Chet had been delayed, he insisted to himself; Chet could never have finished the work in two days; he had been bluffing good-naturedly when he threatened to fly the ship alone . . .

The Arctic Ocean was beneath. The tiny light had passed clear of the land on the moving chart.

He would be there soon . . . Of course Chet had been fooling: he was always ready for a joke . . . Great fellow, Chet! They had taken their training together, and Chet had gone on to win a master-pilot's rating, the highest to be had . . .

Another hour, and a rising hum from a buzzer beside him gave warning of approach to the destination he had fixed. The automatic control was warning him to decelerate. Harkness well knew what was expected of the pilot when that humming sounded; yet, with total disregard for the safety of his helicopters, he dived at full speed for the denser air beneath.

He felt the weight that came suddenly upon him as he drove through and beneath the repelling area, and he flattened out and checked his terrific speed when the gauges quivered at forty thousand.

Then down and still down in a long, slanting dive, till a landmark was found. He was off his course a bit, but it was a matter of minutes until he circled, checked his wild flight, and sank slowly beneath the lift of the dual fans to set the ship down as softly as a snowflake beside a building that was dark and forbiddingly silent—a lonely outpost in a lonely waste.

No answer came to his hail. The building was empty; the ship was gone. And Chet! Chet Bullard! . . . Harkness' head was heavy on his shoulders; his feet took him with hopeless, lagging steps to his waiting ship. He was tired—and the long strain of the flight had been in vain. He was suddenly certain of disaster. And Chet—Chet was up there as some hitherto untouched height, battling with—what?

He broke into a stumbling run and drew himself within the little ship. He was helpless; the ship was unarmed, even if the weapons of his world were of use against this unknown terror; but he knew that he was going up. He would find Chet if he could get within reach of his ship; he would warn him . . . He tried to tell himself that he might yet be in time.

The little cruiser rose slowly under the lift of the fans; when he opened the throttle and swept out in a parabolic curve that ended in a vertical line. Straight up, the ship roared. It shot through a stratum of clouds.

The sun that was under the horizon shone redly now; it grew to a fiery ball; Earth contracted; the markings that were coastlines and mountains drew in upon themselves.

He passed the repelling area and felt the lift of its mysterious force—the "R. A. Effect" that permitted the high-level flying of the world. His speed increased. It would diminish again as the R. A. Effect grew less. Record flights had been made to another ten thousand . . . He wondered what the ceiling would be for the ship beneath him. He would soon learn . . .

He set his broadcast call for the number of Chet's ship. They had been given an experimental license, and "E—L—29-X" the instrument was flashing, "E—L—29-X." Above the heaviside layer that had throttled the radio of earlier years, he knew that his call from so small an instrument as this would be carried for hundreds of miles.

He reached the limit of his climb and was suddenly weightless, floating aimlessly within the little room; the ship was falling, and he was falling, with it. His speed of descent built up to appalling figures until his helicopters found air to take their thrust.

And still no answering word from Chet. The cruiser was climbing again to the heights. The hands of Harkness, trembling slightly now, held her to a vertical climb, while his eyes crept back to the unlit plate where Chet's answering call should flash. But his own call would be a guide to Chet; the directional finders on the new ship would trace the position of his own craft if the new ship were afloat—if it were not lying crushed on the ice below, empty, like the liners, of any sign of life.

His despairing mind snapped sharply to attention. His startled jerk threw the ship widely from her course. A voice was speaking—Chet's voice! It was shouting in the little room!

"Go down, Walt," it told him. "For God's sake, go down! I'm right above you; I've been fighting them for an hour; but I'll make it!"

He heard the clash of levers thrown sharply over in that distant ship: his own hands were frozen to the controls. His ship roared on in its upward course, the futile "E—L—29-X" of his broadcast call still going out to a man who could not remove his hands to send an answer, but who had managed to switch on his sending set into which he could shout.

Harkness was staring into the black void whence the wireless voice had come—staring into the empty night. And then he saw them.

The thin air was crystal clear; his gaze penetrated for miles. And

far up in the heights, where his own ship could never reach and where no clouds could be, were diaphanous wraiths. Like streamers of cloud in long serpentine forms, they writhed and shot through space with lightning speed. They grew luminous as they moved, living streamers of moonlit clouds . . . A whirling cluster was gathered into a falling mass. Out of it in a sharp right turn shot a projectile, tiny and glistening against the velvet black. The swarm closed in again . . . There were other lashing shapes that came diving down. They were coming toward him.

And, in his ears, a voice was imploring: "Down! down! The R. A. tension may stop them! . . . Go down! I am coming—you can't help —I'll make it—they'll rip you to pieces—"

The wraith-like coils that had left the mass above had straightened to sharp spear-heads of speed. They were darting upon him, swelling to monstrous size in their descent. And Walt Harkness saw in an instant the folly of delay: he was not helping Chet, but only hindering . . . His ship swung end for end under his clutching hands, and the thrust of his stern exhaust was added to the pull of Earth to throw him into a downward flight that tore even the thin air into screaming fragments.

One glance through the lookouts behind him showed lashing serpent forms, translucent as pale fire; impossible beasts from space. His reason rejected them while his eyes told him the terrible truth. Despite the speed of his dive, they were gaining on him, coming up fast; one snout that ended in a cupped depression was plain. A mouth gaped beneath it; above was a row of discs that were eyes—eyes that shone more brightly than the luminous body behind—eyes that froze the mind and muscles of the watching man in utter terror.

He forced himself to look ahead, away from the spectral shapes that pursued. They were close, yet he thrilled with the realization that he had helped Chet in some small degree: he had drawn off this group of attackers.

He felt the upthrust of the R. A. Effect; he felt, too, the pull of a body that had coiled about his ship. No intangible, vaporous thing, this. The glass of his control room was obscured by a clinging, glowing mass while still the little cruiser tore on.

Before his eyes the glowing windows went dark, and he felt the clutching thing stripped from the hull as the ship shot through the invisible area of repulsion. A scant hundred yards away a huge cylinder drove crashingly past. Its metal shone and glittered in the sun; he knew

it for his own ship—his and Chet's. And what was within it? What of Chet? The loudspeaker was silent.

He eased the thundering craft that bore him into a slow-forming curve that did not end for fourscore miles before the wild flight was checked. He swung it back, to guide the ship with shaking hands where a range of mountains rose in icy blackness, and where a gleaming cylinder rested upon a bank of snow whose white expanse showed a figure that came staggering to meet him.

Some experiences and dangers that come to men must be talked over at once; thrills and excitement and narrow escapes must be told and compared. And then, at rare times, there are other happenings that strike too deeply for speech—terrors that rouse emotions beyond mere words.

It was so with Harkness and Chet. A gripping of hands; a perfunctory, "Good work, old man!"—and that was all. They housed the two ships, closing the great doors to keep out the arctic cold; and then Chet Bullard threw himself exhausted upon a cot, while he stared, still wordless, at the high roof overhead. But his hands that gripped and strained at whatever they touched told of the reaction of his wild flight.

Harkness was examing their ship, where shreds of filmy, fibrous material still clung, when Chet spoke.

"You knew they were there?" he asked, "—and you came up to warn me?"

"Sure," Harkness answered simply.

"Thanks," Chet told him with equal brevity.

Another silence. Then: "All right, tell me! What's the story?"

And Walt Harkness told him in brief sentences of the world-wide warning that had flashed, of the liners crashing to Earth and their cabins empty of human life.

"They could do it," said Chet. "They could open the ports and ram those snaky heads inside to feed." He seemed to muse for a moment upon what might have come to him.

"My speed saved me," he told Harkness. "Man, how that ship can travel! I shook them off a hundred times—outmaneuvered them when I could—but they came right back for more.

"How do they propel themselves?" he demanded.

"No one knows," Harkness told him. "That luminosity in action means something—some conversation of energy, electrical, perhaps, to carry them on lines of force of which we know nothing as yet. That's a guess—but they do it. You and I can swear to that."

Chet was pondering deeply. "High-level lanes are closed," he said, "and we are blockaded like the rest of the world. It looks as if our space flights were off. And the Dark Moon trip! We could have made it, too."

If there was a questioning note in those last remarks it was answered promptly.

"No!" said Harkness with explorsive emphasis. "They won't stop me." He struck one clenched fist upon the gleaming hull beside him.

"This is all I've got. And I won't have this if that gang of Schwartzmann's gets its hands upon it. The best I could expect would be a long-drawn fight in the courts, and I can't afford it. I am going up. We've got something good here; we know it's good. And we'll prove it to the world by reaching the Dark Moon."

Another filmy, fibrous mass that had been torn from one of the monsters of the heights slid from above to make a splotch of colorless matter upon the floor.

Harkness stared at it. The firm line of his lips set more firmly still, but his eyes had another expression as he glanced at Chet. He would go alone if he must: no barricade of unearthly beasts could hold him from the great adventure. But Chet?—he must not lead Chet to his death.

"Of course," he said slowly, "you've had one run-in with the brutes." Again he paused. "We don't know where they come from, but my guess is from the Dark Moon. They may be too much for us . . . If you don't feel like tackling them again—"

The figure of Chet Bullard sprang upright from the cot. His harsh voice told of the strain he had endured and his reaction from it.

"What are you trying to tell me?" he demanded. "Are you trying to leave me out?" Then at the look in the other's eyes he grinned sheepishly at his own outburst.

And Walt Harkness threw one arm across Chet's shoulder as he said: "I hoped you would feel that way about it. Now let's make some plans."

Provisions for one year! Even in concentrated form this made a prodigous supply. And arms—pistols and rifles, with cases of cartridges whose every bullet was tipped with the deadly detonite—all this was brought from the nearest accessible points. They landed, though, in various cities, keeping Schwartzmann's ship as inconspiculous as possible, and made their purchases at different supply houses to avoid too-pointed questioning. For Harkness found that he and Bullard were marked men.

The newscaster in the Schwartzmann cabin brought the information.

It brought, too, continued reports of the menace in the upper air. It told of patrol-ships sent down to destruction with no trace of commander or crew; and a cruiser of the International Peace Enforcement Service came back with a story of horror and helplessness.

Their armament was useless. No shells could be timed to match the swift flight of the incredible monsters, and impact charges failed to explode on contact; the filmy, fibrous masses offered little resistance to the shells that pierced them. Yet a wrecked after compartment and smashed port-lights and doors gave evidence of the strength of the brutes when their great sinuous bodies, lined with rows of suction discs, secured a hold.

"Speed!" was Chet Bullard's answer to this, when the newscaster ceased. "Speed!—until we find something better. I got clear of them when they caught me unprepared, but we can rip right through them now that we know what we're up against."

He had turned again to the packing of supplies, but Harkness was held by the sound of his own name.

Mr. Walter Harkness, late of New York, was very much in the day's news. When a young millionaire loses all his wealth beneath a tidal wave; when, further, he flies to Vienna and transfers all rights in the great firm of Harkness, Incorporated, to the Schwartzmann interests in part settlement of his obligations; and, still further, when he is driven to fury by his losses and attacks the great Herr Schwartzmann in a murderous frenzy, wounds him and escapes in Schwartzmann's own ship—that is an item that is worth broadcasting between announcements of greater importance.

It interested Harkness, beyond a doubt. He remembered the shot outside the cabin as he took off in his wild flight. Schwartzmann had been wounded, it seemed, and he was to be blamed for the assault. He smiled grimly as he heard the warrant for his arrest broadcast. Every patrol-ship would be on the watch. And there would be a dozen witnesses to swear to the truth of Schwartzmann's lie.

The plan seemed plain to him. He saw himself in custody; taken to Vienna. And then, at the best, months of waiting in the psychopathic ward of a great institution where the influence of Herr Schwartzmann would not be slight. And, meanwhile, Schwartzmann would have his ship. Clever! But not clever enough. He would fool them, he and Chet.

And then he recalled the girl, Mademoiselle Diane, a slim figure outlined in a lighted window of the old chateau. Was there hope there? he wondered. Had her clear, smiling eyes seen what occurred?

"Nonsense," he told himself. "She saw nothing in that storm. And, besides, she is one of their crowd—tarred with the same stick. Forget her."

But he knew, as he framed the unspoken words, that the advice was vain. He would never forget her. There was a picture in his mind that could not be blooted out—a picture of a tall, slender girl, trim and straight in her mannish attire, who came toward him from her little red speedster. She held out her hand impulsively, and her eyes were smiling as she said: "We will be generous, Monsieur Harkness—"

"Generous!" His smile was bitter as he turned to help Chet in their final work.

IV

HOW OFTEN ARE THE GREAT THINGS of life submerged beneath the trivial. The vast reaches of space that must be traversed; the unknown world that awaited them out there; its lands and seas and the life that was upon it: Walter Harkness was pondering all this deep within his mind. It must have been the same with Chet, yet few words of speculation were exchanged. Instead, the storage of supplies, a checking and rechecking of lists, additional careful testing of generators—such details absorbed them.

And the heavy, gray powder with its admixture of radium that transformed it to super-detonite—this must be carefully charged into the magazines of the generators. A thousand such responsibilities—and yet the moment finally came when all was done.

The midnight sun shone redly from a distant horizon. It cast strange lights across the icy waste. And it flashed back in crimson splendor from the gleaming hull that floated from the hangar and came to rest upon the snowy world.

The two men closed the great doors, and it was as if they were shutting themselves off from their last contact with the world. They stood for long moments, silent, in the utter silence of the frozen north.

Chet Bullard turned, and Harkness gripped his hand. He was suddenly aware of his thankfulness for the companionship of this tall, blond youngster. He tried to speak—but what words could express the tumult of emotions that arose within him? His throat was tight . . .

It was Chet who broke the tense silence; his happy grin flashed like sunshine across his lean face.

"You're right," he answered his companion's unspoken thoughts;

"it's a great little old world we're leaving. I wonder what the new one will be like."

And Harkness smiled back. "Let's go!" he said, and turned toward the waiting ship.

The control room was lined with the instruments they had installed. A nitron illuminator flashed brilliantly upon shining levers—emergency controls that they hoped they would not have to use. Harkness placed his hand upon a small metal ball as Chet reported all ports closed.

The ball hung free in space, supported by the magnetic attraction of the curved bars that made a cage about it. An adaptation of the electrol device that had appeared on the most modern ships. Harkness knew how to handle it. Each movement of the ball within its cage, where magnetic fields crossed and recrossed, would bring instant response. To lift the ball would be to lift the ship; a forward pressure would throw their stern exhaust into roaring life that would hurl them forward; a circular motion would roll them over and over. It was as if he held the ship itself within his hand.

Chet touched a button, and a white light flashed to confirm his report that all was clear. Harkness gently raised the metal ball.

Beneath them a soft thunder echoed from the field of snow, and came back faintly from icy peaks. The snow and ice fell softly away as they rose.

A forward pressure upon the ball, and a louder roaring answered from the stern. A needle quivered and swung over on a dial as their speed increased. Beneath them was a blur of whirling white; ahead was an upthrust mountain range upon which they were driving. And Harkness thrilled with the sense of power that his fingers held as he gently raised the ball and nosed the ship upward in meteor-flight.

The floor beneath them swung with their change of pace. Without it, they would have been thrown against the wall at their backs. The clouds that had been above them lay dead upward. It flashed silently into the banks of gray, through them, and out into clear air above. And always the quivering needle crept up to new marks of speed, while their altimeter marked off the passing levels.

They were through the repelling area when Harkness relinquished the controls to Chet. The metal ball hung unmoving; it would hold automatically to the direction and speed that had been established. The hand of the master-pilot found it quickly. They were in dangerous territory now—a vast void under a ceiling of black, star-specked space.

No writhing, darting wraith-forms caught the rays of the distant sun. Their way seemed clear.

Harkness' eyes were straining ahead, searching for serpent forms, when the small cone beside him hummed a warning that they were not alone. Another ship in this zone of danger?—it seemed incredible. But more incredible was the scream that rang shrilly from the cone. "Help! Oh, help me!" a feminine voice implored.

Harkness sprang for the instrument where the voice was calling. "We aren't the only fools up here," he exclaimed; "and that's a woman's voice, too!" He pressed a button, and a needle swung instantly to point the direction whence the radio waves were coming.

"Hard a-port!" he ordered. "Ten degrees, and hold her level. No—two points down."

But Chet's steady hand had anticipated the order. He had seen the direction-finder, and he swung the metal ball with a single motion that swept them in a curve that seemed crushing them to the floor.

The ship levelled off; the ball was thrust forward, and the thunder from the stern was deafening despite their insulated walls. The shuddering structure beneath them was hurled forward till the needle of the speed-indicator jammed tightly against its farthest pin. And ahead of them was no emptiness of space.

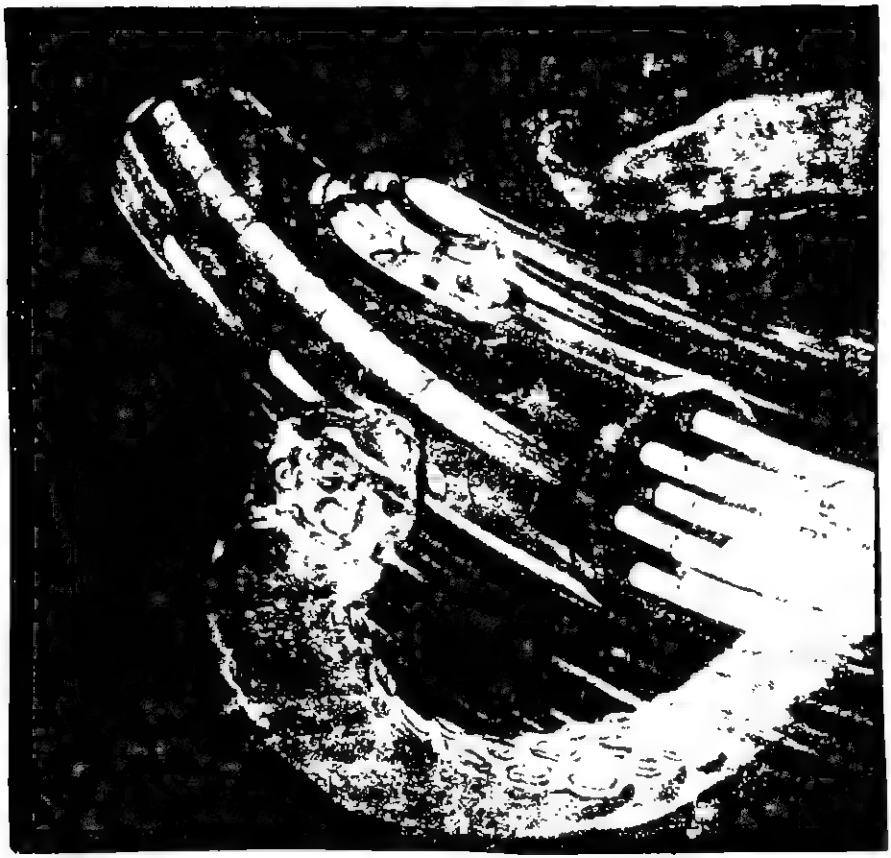
The air was alive with darting forms. Harkness saw them plainly now—great trailing streamers of speed that shot downward from the heights. The sun caught them in their flight to make iridescent rainbow hues that would have been beautiful but for the hideous heads, the sucker-discs that lined the bodies and the one great disc that cupped on the end of each thrusting snout.

And beneath those that fell from on high was a cluster of the same sinister, writhing shapes which clung to a speeding ship that rolled and swung vainly in an effort to shake them off.

The coiling, slashing serpent-forms had fastened to the doomed ship. Their thrashing bodies streamed out behind it. They made a cluster of flashing color whose center point was a tiny airship, a speedster, a gay little craft. And her sides shone red as blood—red as they had shone on the grassy lawn of an old chateau near far-off Vienna.

"It's Diane!" Harkness was shouting. "Good Lord, Chet, it's Diane!"

This was the girl he had told himself he would forget. She was there in that ship, her hands were wrenching at the controls in a fight that was hopeless. He saw her so plainly—a pitiful, helpless figure, fighting vainly against this nightmare attack.



Behind them, a red ship was falling—falling free.

Only an instant of blurred wonderment at her presence up there then a frenzy possessed him. He leaped to the side of the crouching pilot, but his out-stretched hands that clutched at the control stopped motionless in air.

Chet Bullard, master-pilot of the first rank, upon whose chest was the triple star that gave him authority to command all the air-levels of Earth, was tense and crouching. His eyes were sighting along an instrument of his own devising as if he were aiming some super-gun of a great air cruiser.

But he was riding the projectile itself and guiding it as he rode. He

threw the ship like a giant shell in a screaming, sweeping arc upon the red craft that drove across their bow.

They were crashing upon it: the red speedster swelled instantly before their eyes. Harkness winced involuntarily from the crash that never came.

Chet must have missed it by inches, Harkness knew; but he knew, too, that the impact he felt was no shattering of metal upon metal. The heavy windows of the control room went black with the masses of fibrous flesh that crashed upon them; then cleared in an instant as the ship swept through.

Behind them a red ship was falling—falling free! And vaporous masses, ripped to ribbons, were falling, too, while other wraith-like forms closed upon them in cannibalistic feasting.

Their terrific speed swept them on into space. When the pilot could check it, and turn, they found that the red ship was gone.

"After it!" Harkness was shouting. "She went down out of control, but they didn't get her. They've only sprung the door-ports a crack, releasing the internal pressure." He told himself this was true: he would not admit for an instant the possible truth of the vision that flashed through his mind—a ripping of doors—a thrusting snout that writhed in where a girl stood fighting.

"Get it!" he ordered; "get it! I'll stand by for rescue."

He sprang for the switch that controlled the great rescue magnets. Not often were they used, but every ship must have them: it was so ordered by the Board of Control. And every ship had an inset of iron in its non-magnetic hull.

His hand was upon the switch in an agony of waiting. Outside were other beastly shapes, like no horror of Earth, that came slantingly upon them, but even their speed was unequal to the chase of this new craft that left them far astern. Harkness saw the last ones vanish as Chet drove down through the repelling area. And he had eyes only for the first sight of the tiny ship that had fallen so helplessly.

Ahead and below them the sun marked a brilliant red dot. It was falling with terrific speed, and yet, so swift was their own pace, it took form too quickly: they would overshoot the mark . . . Harkness felt the ship shudder in slackening speed as the blast from the bow roared out.

They were turning; aiming down. The red shape passed from view where Harkness stood. His hand was tight upon the heavy switch.

Chet's voice came sharp and clear: "Rescue switch—ready?" He appeared as cool and steady as if he were commanding on an experimental

test instead of making his first rescue in the air. And Harkness answered: "Ready."

A pause. To the waiting man it was an eternity of suspense. Then, "Contact!" Chet shouted, and Harkness' tense muscles threw the current into crashing life.

He felt the smash and jar as the two ships came together. He knew that the great magnets in their lower hull and gripped the plates on the top of the other ship. He was certain that the light fans of the smaller craft must have been crushed; but they had the little red speedster in an unshakable grip; and they would land it gently. And then—then he would know!

The dreadful visions in his mind would not down . . . Chet's voice broke in upon him.

"I can't maintain altitude," Chet was saying. "Our vertical blasts strike upon the other ship; they are almost neutralized." He pointed to a needle that was moving with slow certainty and deadly persistence across a graduated dial. It was their low-level altimeter, marking their fall. Harkness stared at it in stunned understanding.

"We can't hold on," the pilot was saying; "we'll crash sure as fate. But I'm darned if we'll ever let go!"

Harkness made no reply. He had dashed for an after-compartment to their storage place of tools, and returned with a blow torch in his hand. He lit it and checked its blue flame to a needle of fire.

"Listen, Chet," he said, and the note of command in his voice told who was in charge, at the final analysis, in this emergency. "I will be down below. You call out when we are down to twenty thousand: I can stand the thin air there. I will open the emergency slot in the lower hull."

"You're going down?" Chet asked. He glanced at the torch and nodded his understanding. "Going to cut you way through and—"

"I'll get her if she's there to get," Harkness told him grimly. "At five hundred, if I'm not back, pull the switch."

The pilot's reply came with equal emphasis. "Make it snappy," he said: "this collision instrument has picked up the signals of five patrolships a hundred miles to the south."

They dropped swiftly to the twenty level, and Harkness heard the deafening roar of their lower exhausts as he opened the slot in their ship's hull. He dropped to the red surface held close beneath, while the cold gripped him and the whirling blasts of air tore at him. But the

torch did its work, and he lowered himself into the cabin of the little craft that had been the plaything of Mademoiselle Diane.

The cabin was a splintered wreck, where a horrible head had smashed in search of food. One entrance port was torn open, and the head itself still hung where it had lodged. The mouth gaped flabbily open; above it was the suction cup that formed a snout; and above that, a row of staring, sightless eyes. Chet had slammed into the mass of serpents just in time, Harkness realized. Just in time, or just too late. . . .

The door to the control room was sprung and jammed. He pried it open to see the unconscious body that lay huddled upon the floor. But he knew, with a wave of thankfulness that was suffocating, that the brute had not reached her: only the slow release of the air-pressure had rendered her unconscious. He was beside her in an instant.

He was dimly aware of the thunder of exhausts and the shrill scream of helicopters as he reached the upper surface of the red ship and forced his unconscious burden into the emergency slot above his head.

"They're here!" Chet was shouting excitedly. "We're ordered to halt. Looks as if our flight was postponed." He tried to smile, but the experiment was a failure.

"I am dodging around to keep that big one from grabbing us with its magnet. Schwartzmann is aboard one of the patrols; they think the girl is in her ship. They won't fire on us as long as we hang on. But we'll crash if we do that, and they'll nail us if we let go."

Harkness had placed the girl's body upon the floor. His answer was a quick leap to the pilot's side. "See to her," he ordered; "I'll take the ship. Stop us now? Like hell they will! What's all our power for?"

One glance gave him the situation: the big gray fighter above, slipping down to seize them with her powerful magnets; four other patrol cruisers that slowly circled, their helicopters holding them even with the two ships that clung together in swift descent.

Chet was right: no burst of speed could save them from the guns of the patrols if they dropped the red speedster and made a break for it. They thought Diane was still in her ship, and a patrol would have the little craft safe before she had dropped a thousand feet. Their own stern exhaust would be torn by a detonite shell, and the big cruiser would seize them in the same way. No—they must hang onto the girl's ship and outmaneuver the others. He pressed the metal ball forward to the limit of its space, and the stern exhaust crashed into action with all the suddenness of his own resolve.

The ship beneath him threw itself straight ahead, flashed under the

patrol-ship that blocked them, and was away. The weight below, and its resistance to the air, dragged them down, but Harkness brought the ball up, and the ship answered with a slow lift of the bow that aimed them straight out into space.

A vertical climb!—and the voice from the instrument beside him was shouting orders to halt. On each side were patrol-ships that roared upward with him.

"Cut those motors!" the voice commanded. "Release that ship! Halt, or we will fire!"

Harkness threw his ship into a wild spiral for reply, and the thin crack of guns came to him from outside. Down! A headlong dive! Then out and up again!

He was through the repelling area in a twisting, rocking flight. Not hit as yet: they had to aim carefully to avoid damaging the red craft. . . . He was straining his eyes for a glimpse of serpent-forms, and he laughed softly under his breath at thought of his strange allies. Laughed!—until he saw them coming.

He slammed down the switch on his own broadcast sender. "Back!" he shouted; "back, all of you! Look up! Look above you! The monsters are coming!—the air-beasts!—they are attacking!"

He threw his own ship into a dive; saw the others do likewise; then leaped for the switch on the rescue magnets and pulled it open.

He felt the red ship fall clear. He swung his own ship free and aimed it out and up on a long line of speed. Beside him a voice from a distant, fleeing patrol was shouting: "Come back, you fool! Down! Down, through the R. A.!"

One backward glance showed him that his pursuers were safe. The serpents had turned to pursue him, and other writhing luminosities were falling from above. He swung head on, his motors wide open, his speed building up and up, to crash softly through the advance guard of the giant creatures out of space.

Nothing could stop him! He was trembling with the knowledge, and with the sheer joy of the adventure. Nothing could check them; neither cruisers nor monsters; nothing of Earth or of space. They were free; they were on their way out—out where a new world awaited—where the Dark Moon raced on her unlighted path!

For the moment he had forgotten their passenger. The thrill of combat and the ecstasy of winning freedom for their great adventure had filled him to forgetfulness of all else.

"We're off!" he shouted. "Off for the Dark Moon!" Then he remem-

bered, and turned where Chet was supporting the head of a slim girl whose eyes opened to look about, to glance from Chet to Harkness and back to Chet who was holding her.

"You saved me," she breathed, "from them!" She raised one hand weakly to cover her eyes at memory of those writhing shapes, then let it fall as other memories crowded in.

"The patrol-ships!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "You must . . ." Her voice trailed off into silence.

She was able to stand, and with Chet's help she came slowly to her feet as Harkness reached her. His voice was harsh and scornful; all elation had left him. He forced himself to hold his unsmiling gaze steadily upon the soft brown eyes that turned to his.

"Yes," he said; "we must 'surrender'—that was the word you wanted. We must surrender! . . . Well, Mam'selle Diane, we're not in a surrendering mood today. We've got away; made our escape!"

He laughed loudly and contemptuously, though he winced at the look of hurt that opened the brown eyes wide.

"You brought the patrol," he went on; "you learned where we were—"

"Herr Schwartzmann did," she interrupted in a quiet voice. "He located you; your signals were picked up . . . They left two hours before I did," she added enigmatically. "I had to fly high, above the R. A. for greater speed."

Walt Harkness was bewildered. "More generosity?" he inquired. "You had to see the end of the hunt—be in at the death?"

"In at the death!" she echoed, and laughed in a tone that trembled and broke. "I nearly was, truly. But, no, my dear Monsieur Harkness: incredible as it seems, in view of your unfriendly reception, I came to warn you! . But, enough of that. Tell me—you see how interested I am in your plans?—what did you say of the Dark Moon?"

Walter Harkness tried to rearrange his jumbled thoughts. She had come to warn them. Was this true? Or was this girl, who laughed so lightly, playing with him?

"Yes," he said dully, "we were bound for the Dark Moon. The Patrol couldn't stop us, nor the beasts that have paralyzed the flying service of Earth; but you have done it. We will turn back at once, and return you safely—"

He was again at the controls, one hand extended for the metal ball, when her slim hand closed upon his wrist.

"I know Herr Schwartzmann's plans," she said quietly. "He would

ruin you; seize your ship; steal for himself the glory of your invention. Would you go back and deliver yourself into his hands—because of me?"

The brown eyes, Harkness found, were upon his with an expression he could not fathon. "Yes," he said simply.

And still the eyes looked into his. There was laughter in them, and something else whose meaning was concealed.

"I ask you not to do this," she was saying. "You will succeed: I read it in your face. Let me go with you; let me share in the adventure. I am begging this of you. It is your turn to be generous."

Harkness' hand upon the metal ball held it motionless within its enclosing cage. From astern there came to him the muffled roar of a blast that drove them on and out into space—black, velvety space, thick-studded with sharp points of light . . . He stared into that wondrous night, then back into the eyes that looked steadily, unfathomably, into his . . . And his hand was unresisting as the strong, slender fingers about his wrist drew it back . . .

They were off for the Dark Moon: their journey, truly, was begun. And this girl, whom he had told himself to forget, was going with them. There was much that he did not understand, but he knew that he was glad with a gladness that transcended all previous thrills of the perilous plan.

V

They were seated in the cabin of the man-made meteor that the brain of Harkness had conceived—two men and a girl. And they stared at one another unsmilingly, with eyes which reflected their comprehension of the risks that they ran and the dangers which lay ahead in the dark void. Yet the brown eyes of Mam'selle Diane, no less than the others, were afire with the thrill of adventure—the same response to the same lure that has carried men to each new exploration—or to their death.

Behind them, a rear lookout port framed a picture of awful majesty. Earth was a great disc, faintly luminous in a curtain of dead black. From beyond it, a hidden sun made glorious flame of the disc's entire rim. And, streaming toward it, a straight, blasting line from their stern exhaust, was an arrow of blue.

It had taken form slowly, that arrow of blue fire, and Harkness answered an unspoken question from the girl.

"Hydrogen and oxygen," he explained. "It is an explosive mixture

at this height, but too thin to take fire. It will pass. Beyond this is pure hydrogen. And then, nothing."

He turned to switch on their radio receiver, and he set it for the news-casting waves that went forth from the most powerful station of Earth, the Press Tower of New York. A voice came to them faintly. For a time it vied with the muffled roar of their thundering exhaust; then it lost volume, faded, and was finally gone.

Their last contact with Earth was severed. There remained only blackness, and a great abyss through which they were plunging.

Harkness busied himself with calculations. He would have spoken, but the silence that followed the vanished voice of Earth had robbed his own voice of control.

A telescope sight was fixed rigid with the axis of their ship. He looked through it, moved their controls, and brought the cross-hairs of his instrument to bear upon a star.

"That's about right," he said quietly. "I got all the information that the observatories had, on the orbit of the Dark Moon. It is circling Earth from north to south. It coincided for a short time with our own moon when it first hit: that's what kicked up the big wave and jarred us up. But it swung off and seems to have settled down in its own orbit now.

"Two hundred thousand miles away is what they make it, though I think that is more or less of a guess. I wish we could measure our speed." He looked at the Earth-induction speed-indicator. Useless now, it registered zero.

"Well," he added, "we are shooting for the North Star. We will pass close to the Dark Moon's orbit; it should be about over the Pole on this date. And there is one good safe bet, anyhow: there is nothing between here and there to stop us."

He was being weakly facetious, but his efforts met with an enthusiastic response. The tension of the moment, it was plain, had not affected Harkness alone. But it was many hours before the error of his statement was made manifest to all.

An island, faintly luminous, lay ahead. It grew to enormous size as they dashed upon it. Harkness sprang for the controls, but, before he could reach them, they had struck the vast field of pale green light, flashed through it, and left it diminishing in size behind them. Then, other lights, not brilliant, but like phosphorescent bodies, that came and went and flashed by with blinding speed.

Another luminous area rushed at them from ahead. At first it was a

speck, then an island, and then a continent in size, and through it moved other brighter lights. This time a slight suggestion of an impact was felt. Here was matter of a form they could not guess. It was Chet who pointed to the glass of their control room. The heavy lights of the lookouts were smeared with sticky fluid that drew together in trickling streams.

"Nothing between us and the Dark Moon?" he asked of Harkness. "And space is an empty void? We Earth-creatures are a conceited lot."

"Meaning?" the girl questioned.

"Meaning that because we live on Earth—walk on solid ground, swim in the water and fly in the air—we deny the existence of life in space. There's the answer written in the blood of some life that was snuffed out as we hit it."

Harkness shook his head doubtfully. "Matter of some sort," he admitted, "and the serpents came from somewhere; but, as for the rest, the idea that the ocean of space is filled with life as our Earth-oceans are—creatures living and moving through unknown fields of force . . . " He did not finish the denial, but looked with wondering gaze at the myriad points that flashed softly into glowing masses and darted aside before their onward rush.

It was hours later that he checked their flight. Slowly at first he cut off the exhaust from their stern and opened the bow valve. Slowly, for their wild speed must slacken as it had been built up, by slow degrees. The self-adjusting floor swung forward and up. Their deceleration was like the pull of gravity, and now straight ahead seemed down.

More hours, and they were at rest, floating in an ethereal ocean, an ocean teeming with strange life. Each face was pressed close to a lookout port. No one of the three could speak; each was too absorbed in the story his eyes were reading—this story of a strange, new existence where no life should have been.

Animalculae. They came in swarms; cloud masses of them floated past; and swirls of phosphorescent fire marked the presence of larger creatures that moved among them. Large and small, each living creature was invisible until it moved; then came the greenish light, like phosphorescence and yet unlike.

Still Harkness could not force himself to believe the irrefutable evidence. What of astronomy? he asked himself. Why was this matter not visible through telescopes? Why did it not make its prescence known through interference? Through refraction of light? . . . And then he realized the incredible distance within the scope of his vision; he knew that this swarming life was actually more widely spaced; and the light

of a brilliant star shone toward him through the center of a living mass to prove that here was matter that offered no resistance to the passage of light.

A void of nothingness was before his eyes. He saw its black emptiness change to pale green fire that swirled and fled before a large shape. The newcomer swept down like light itself. Softly green like the others, its rounded body was outlined in a huge circle of orange light. Like a cyclopean pod, it was open at one end, and that open end closed and opened and closed again as the creature gulped in uncounted millions of the tiny, luminous dots—every one, as Harkness now knew, a living thing.

Strange light whirled into life and vanished, each evidencing a battle where life took life in this ocean of the invisible living. A gasp from the girl brought Harkness quickly about.

"Another one!" she said breathlessly, and pointed where the blackness was looped with writhing fire. It came swiftly near to show the outline of the dread serpent form; the suction cups showed plainly.

Danger was in this thing. Harkness knew, but it passed them by before he could move. The further lookout showed two gleaming monsters locked together in deadly embrace. So swift was their whirling motion that details of form were lost: only a confusion of lashing tentacles that whipped and tore, and one glimpse of a savage maw that sheared the tentacles off. Then the serpent was upon them.

Harkness had seen one time a sight that was indelibly impressed upon his memory. A steeloid cable had broken under a terrific strain; the end of it had lashed out with a speed the eye could not follow, to wind itself around the superstructure of a submarine—and the men who were gathered there.

He thought of that now, saw again the bleeding mass that had been an instant before a group of humans, as the serpent seized its prey. The two combatants were encircled in a living coil of light. Then, as motion ceased, the ethereal sea went dark except for pulsing suction cups that drew and strained at the bodies they held.

Harkness was groping for the controls—he saw too plainly their own helplessness when they were at rest—but the voice of Diane checked him.

"That bright star went out," she said; and Harkness let his gaze follow where she pointed.

The stars that were distant suns shone in brilliant points of light; no atmosphere here to dim them or cause a flickering. A bright point van-

ished as she looked—another!—and he knew abruptly that he was seeing a circle of blackness that moved slowly between them and the stars.

"The Moon!" he shouted. "The Dark Moon!" And now his hand found the controls that threw their ship into thunderous life. It was approaching! He swung the metal ball to throw them ahead and to one side, and the roar from the stern told of the fast-growing speed that was pressing them to the floor . . .

An hour of wild flight, and the circle was close upon them. Too faintly lighted to register in the telescopes of Earth, there was still enough of luminosity to mark it as a round disc of violet that grew dimly bluish-green around the edge.

It ceased to grow. Their ship, Harkness knew, was speeding beside it some hundreds of miles away. But they were within its gravitational pull, and were falling toward it. And he aimed his ship bow-on to make the forward blast a check upon their falling speed.

The circle broadened; become a sphere; and then they were plunging through clouds more tenuous than any vapors of Earth—thick layers of gas that reflected no rays from the distant sun.

Beside them a sinuous form showed where a serpent of space was trying to match their speed. Harkness saw it twisting convulsively in the stratum of gas; it was falling, lifeless, beside them as they sped on and away. Here was something the beasts could not combat. He made a mental note of the fact, but his thoughts flashed again to what lay ahead.

Every eye was held close to the lookouts that forced forward. The three were breathless, wordless; the hand of Harkness that held the tiny ball was all that moved.

Ahead of them was their goal, the Dark Moon! And they were prepared for Stygian darkness and a land of perpetual night. The almost invisible gas-clouds thinned; there was a glow ahead that grew brilliant as they watched; and then, with a blinding suddenness that made them shield their eyes, there flashed before them a world of light.

Each line of shore was marked distinctly there; the blue and violet of rippling seas were blended with unreal hues; there were mountains upthrust and, on, on the horizon, a range of volcanic peaks that poured forth flashing eruptions half-blanketed by invisible gas.

"The *Dark* Moon!" gasped Harkness. He was spellbound with utter awe at the spectacle he beheld. This brilliant world a-gleam to its farthest horizon with golden, glorious sunlight, softly spread and diffused! This, *this!* was the Dark Moon!

He turned to share with the others the delirium of ecstatic wonder too overpowering to be borne alone—turned, to find his happiness shot through with a pang of regret. He saw Chet and Diane. They had been standing together at a wide forward lookout; and now she was holding one hand of the pilot to her breast in an embrace of passionate joy.

Unconscious, that gesture of delight at this climax of their perilous trip?—Harkness told himself that this was so. But he swung back to the helm of the ship. He glanced at instruments that again were registering; he saw the air-pressure indicator that told of oxygen and an atmosphere where men might live. He gauged his distance carefully, and prepared to land.

The moment of depression could not last, for there was too much here to fill brain and eyes. What would they find? Was there life? His question was answered by an awkward body that flapped from beneath them on clumsy wings. He glimpsed a sinuous neck, a head that was all mouth and flabby pouch, and the mouth opened ludicrously in what was doubtless a cry of alarm.

Then land, that took form and detail; a mountain whose curled top was like a frozen wave of stone. In a valley below it trees were growing. They swayed in a wind, and their branches reached upward and flowed and waved like seaweed on the ocean's floor. Green—vivid, glowing green!—and reds and purples that might be flowers and fruit.

An open space in a little valley spread invitingly before him, and he laid the ship down there in a jungle of lush grasses—set it down as gently as if he were landing from a jaunt of a thousand miles instead of two hundred times that distance straight away from Earth.

The others were looking at him with glowing, excited eyes. In the cabin was silence. Harkness felt that he must speak, must say something worthy of the moment—something to express in slight degree the upwelling emotion that filled them all, three adventurers about to set foot upon a virgin world . . .

The pause was long-drawn, until he ended it in a voice that had all the solemn importance of a head-steward's announcement on a liner of the high-level service. But the corners of his lips were twitching to a little smile.

"This," he announced, "is as far as we go. This is the end of our run."

The tension that had held them emotionally taut was ended. With outstretched hands Diane ran toward him, and her broken laugh betrayed the hysteria she was holding back.

"Congratulations!" she cried, and clung tightly to his hands. "Congratulations, M'sieu Walter—"

Her voice choked and she could not go on; but the eyes that were raised to his were luminous through the tears that filled them.

From the cabin beyond came a clash of levers, where Chet was preparing to open a port. And Harkness followed with unseeing eyes where the pilot waited that their commander might be the first to step forth upon an unknown globe—upon the surface of what men had called "The Dark Moon."

VI

WALTER HARKNESS, PILOTING HIS SHIP to a slow, safe landing on a new world, had watched his instruments with care. He had seen the outer pressure build up to that of the air of Earth; the spectro-analyzer had shown nitrogen preponderating, with sufficient oxygen to support life. And, below him, a monstrous thing that flopped hurriedly away on leather wings had told him that life was there.

But what would that life be? This was the question uppermost in the minds of all three as they stepped forth—the first of Earth's people to ask the question and to find the answer.

Chet had gone to their stores. He strapped a belt about his waist, a belt banded with a row of detonite cartridges, and a pistol hung at his hip. He handed another to Harkness. But the pistol he offered Diane was refused.

"My many accomplishments," she said, laughing, "do not include that. I never could shoot—and besides I will not need to with both of you here." Her hand was resting confidently upon Chet's arms as they followed where Harkness led.

The heavy grass, standing waist-high in the little valley where their ship was at rest, stirred to ripples of vivid green as a light breeze touched it. Above, the sun shone warm upon ths world of tropical growth. Harkness, listening in the utter silence for sounds that might mean danger, let his eyes follow up the rugged wall of rock that hemmed them in on two sides. It gleamed with metallic hues in the midday glare. He looked on to the sun above.

"A dark moon!" he said wonderingly. "Dark!—and yet it is blazing bright. Why can't we see it from Earth? Why is it dark? . . . I've an idea that the gas we came through is the answer. There is metal, we

know, that conducts an electric current in only one direction: why not a gas that will do the same with light?"

The pilot was listening, but Diane seemed uninterested in scientific speculations. "The trees!" she breathed in rapture; "the marvelous, beautiful trees!"

She was gazing toward distant towering growths where the valley widened. Like no trees of Earth, these monsters towered high in air, their black trunks branching to end in tendrils that raised high above them. And the tendrils were a waving, ever-moving sea of color, where rainbow iridescence was stabbed through with the flash of crimson buds. A down-draft of air brought a heady, intoxicating odor.

And still there was silence. To Walter Harkness, standing motionless and alert amidst the waving grass, it seemed a hush of waiting. A prickle of apprehension passed over his skin. He glanced about, his pistol ready in his hand, looked back for a moment at the ship, then smiled inwardly in self-derision of his fear as he strode forward.

"Let's have a look at things," he said with a heartiness not entirely sincere. "We'll discover nothing standing here."

But the silence weighed upon them all as they pressed on. No exclamations of amazement from them now, no speculations on what might lie ahead. Only wide-eyed alertness and a constant listening, listening—until the silence was broken by a scream.

A man it seemed at first, when Harkness saw the figure leap outward from the cliff. A second one followed. They landed on all fours upon a rock that jutted outward toward the trees.

The impact would have killed a human, but these creatures stood upright to face the concealment from which they had sprung. One was covered with matted, brown hair. Its arms were long, and its fists pounded upon a barrel-like chest, while it growled hoarsely. The other ape-thing, naked and hairless, did the same. They were both uttering those sounds, that at times seemed almost like grunted words, when the end came.

A swishing of leather wings!—a swooping, darting rush of a huge body!—and one of the ape-men, as Harkness had mentally termed them, was struggling in the clutch of talons that gripped him fast.

The giant bat-shape that had seized him reached for the other, too. A talon ripped at the naked face, but the ape-man dodged and vanished among the rocks.

With pounding wings, the bat swept off in lumbering flight, but with its burden it seemed heavy, and failed to rise. The trees were close, and

their waving tentacles drew back, then shot out to splash about the intruder. The talons released their hold, and the huge leather wings flapped frantically; but too late. Both captor and captive were wrapped in an embrace of iridescent arms and held struggling in mid-air, while the unmoving watchers below stood in horror before this drama of life and death.

Then a red bud opened. It was enormous, and its flowery beauty made more revolting the spectacle of the living food that was thrust within its maw.

The bud closed. Its petal were like lips . . . And Diane, in white-faced horror, was clinging to the protecting arm of Chet Bullard beside her. Chet, too, had paled beneath his tan. But Walter Harkness, though white of face, was staring not at the crimson bud, shut tightly about its living food, but upward toward the broken, rocky face of the cliff.

The flying thing, the unnamed horror of the air, had come silently from on high. None of them had seen it until it struck, and he was sure that the ape-men had been taken unaware. Then what had frightened them? What other horror had driven them in screaming terror to that fearful spring out into the open where they must have known danger awaited?

Did a rock move? he wondered. Was the splotch of color—that mottling of crimson and copper and gray—a part of the metallic mass? His rubbed his smarting eyes—and when he looked again the color was gone. But he had a conviction that eyes, sinister and deadly, had been staring into his, that a living mass had withdrawn softly into a shadowed cave, and that the menace that had threatened the ape-men was directed now toward them.

Was this the reason for the silence? Was this valley, so peaceful in its sunlit stillness, a place of death, from which all living things kept clear? Had the ape-men been drawn there through curiosity at seeing their ship float down?

And the quiet beauty of the valley—it might be as horrible a mockery as the blazing splendor of those things ahead—those beautiful and horrible eaters of flesh! His voice was unsteady as he turned toward the others.

"Let's call this off," he said; "there is something up there. We'll go back to the ship and get up in the air again. We'll find a healthier place to land."

Like Harkness, Chet Bullard held his pistol ready in his hand. "Some-

thing else?" he inquired. "You saw something? And Harkness nodded grimly.

They retraced their steps. A half-mile, perhaps. It had seemed long as they ventured forth, and was no shorter now. And the gleaming, silvery shape of the ship was entirely lovely to their eyes as they approached.

Harkness circled the blunt bow with its open exhaust high above his head. On the far side was the port where they had emerged; its open door would be welcome in its promise of safe seclusion. His sign of relief was echoed by the two who followed, for the horror and apprehension had been felt by all. But the breath choked abruptly in his throat.

Before them was the door, its thick metal wide-swung as they had left it. But doorway itself, where warm darkness should have invited, was entirely sealed by a web of translucent stuff.

Harkness approached to look more closely. The substance was glistening and smooth—yellowish—almost transparent. It was made up of a tangle of woven cords which clung tightly to the metal sides. Harkness reached out in sudden fury to grip it and tear it loose. He grasped the slippery stuff, stumbled—and hung suspended by a tenacious hold that gripped his hand where it had touched, and would not let go.

His arm swung against it, and his shoulder. They were instantly immovable. And he knew in a single terrifying instant his utter helplessness. He saw Chet Bullard's hands come up, and he found his voice in time to scream a harsh warning to him.

"Tear me loose!" he commanded, "but don't touch the damned stuff!" It took the combined strength of the pilot and the girl to free him, and Harkness had to set his teeth to restrain an exclamation of pain as his hand came slowly from the web that clung and clung and would not let go.

From his place upon the ground he saw Chet raise a broken piece of rock. It was like metal, and heavy, as the pilot's efforts proved, though it was surprisingly small in size. He saw Chet raise it above his head and crash it upon the thick web that filled the door. And, as his own aching arm had been held, the rock was seized in the tough strands, which gave back only slightly under the blow.

Harkness scrambled to his feet. The fury that had possessed him made the hurt of his arm unfelt. What devil's-work was this that barred them from the safety of the ship? The memory of that other menace, half-seen among the rocks, was strong upon him.

"Stand back!" he shouted to Chet and the girl, and he raised his

pistol to send a charge of detonite into the unyielding mass. Here was power to tear the clinging stuff to atoms.

He felt Chet's body plunge upon him an instant before he fired, and his pistol was knocked up and flew outward from his hand. He heard the pilot's voice.

"Walt!" Chet was saying. "For God's sake come out of it! Are you crazy? You might have wrecked that door-port so we never could have fixed it; or the bullet could have gone on through to explode inside the ship. Either way we would never get back: no leaky hull would ever let us make the trip home!"

Chet was right: Harkness knew it in a moment. He knew the folly of what he would have done, yet knew, too, that desperate measures were needed and needed quickly. The eyes of a devil had held his own from the darkness of the darkness of the rocks, and the same rock wall came close to where they stood. He was in command; it was up to him—

The moment of indecision ended as a mass of viscous fluid splashed heavily against the ship. Harkness whirled about to face the rocks. He was calm now and controlled, but under his quiet courage was a fear that gripped him. A fear of what he should find! But the reality was so far beyond any imagined terror as to leave him cold.

Above them and thirty feet away on a rocky ledge was a thing of horror. Basilisk eyes in a hairy head; gray, stringy hairs; and the fearful head ended in narrow, outthrust jaws, where more of the gray hairs hung like moss from lips that writhed and curled and sucked at the air with a whistling shrillness. Those jaws could crush a man to pulp. And the head seemed huge until the body behind it came into view.

The suddenness with which the great body rose showed the strength of the beast. A prodigous sack, like black leather, with markings of crimson and copper!—and the straggling, ropy hairs on it were greenish-gray like the lustre of the rocks at its back.

It stood upright on great hairy legs. The eyes shot forward on protruding antennae. The sack-like body flexed to bring the rear part under and forward. It was aiming at them.

Harkness seized the slim figure of the girl who stood mute with horror, beside him. He threw her roughly to the gound, for the meaning of the viscous splash was plain.

"Down!" he shouted to Chet. "Down on the ground!" And he felt the swish of another liquid mass above his head as he obeyed his own command.

He felt for his pistol, then remembered it was gone—lost when Chet sprang upon him. But Chet had his.

"Shoot!" he ordered. "Shoot the damned thing, Chet! Kill the spider!"

Spider! He had named it unconsciously. But the name was inadequate, for here was a thing of horror beyond even a spider of prodigious size. This peaceful valley!—and here was its ruler, frightful, incredibly loathsome!

He waited for the sound of a shot. A cursing, instead, was the only reply: Chet was not firing! Harkness whirled to see the pilot pinned by one arm to the web.

The fluid had caught him; he had not dropped quickly enough. And his right hand that had been raised, and the pistol it held, were clamped fast to the awful stuff.

There was no word of appeal, no call for help, yet Chet Bullard must have known what this meant. But neither did Harkness wait for that word. One spring, and he had the pilot by the waist, and he felt the weight of the girl's slim body added to his as her arms went about him to help. Chet's face went chalk-white as the hand tore loose. The pistol remained buried in the clinging stuff.

From the corner of his eye, Harkness saw the monster crouched to spring. He was half dragging the other two as he stooped and ran for the bow of the ship. The monstrous body thudded against the metal hull behind them.

The leap was prodigious. He saw the sack-like body fall inert, the great, hairy legs shaking. For the moment, the attacker was helpless; but the respite was brief, as the glaring eyes plainly told.

Below the ledge where the beast had been was an opening in the rocks—a bit of black shadow that was darker than the lustrous metal of the cliff. There was a chance—

"I can make it," Chet was saying, as Harkness dragged him on; "help Diane!" But the girl had sprung before them to gain a foothold and extend a helping hand. And they were back in the darkness of a rocky cave before the sunlit entrance was blocked by a hairy head and a horrible, slavering mouth on a body too huge to enter.

VII

SPENT AND SHAKEN, the three passed onward into the

cave. Harkness searched his pockets for his neolite flash; found it—a tiny pencil with a tip of glass—and the darkness of the inner cave was flooded with light.

A box of food tablets was in a pocket of Chet's jacket, and there was water that trickled in a tiny stream out of the rocks. It could have been worse, Diane pointed out with forced gaiety. But Harkness, who had gone back for a final look at the entrance to the cave, found it difficult to smile.

He had found the entrance an opening no longer: it was sealed with a giant web of ropy strands—a network, welded together to a glutinous mesh. They were sealed in as effectively as if the opening were closed by a thick door of steel.

They gathered fungus that grew in thready clumps on the walls, and this served as a mattress to soften the rocky floor that must be their bed. And Harkness sat silent in the darkness long after the others were asleep—sat alone on guard, to think and to reach, at last, a conclusion.

A cleavage in the rocks made a narrow crack to the outside world, and through it the starlight filtered dimly. The thread of light grew brilliantly golden—moonlight, a hundredfold more bright than moonlight on Earth. And he realized that the source of light was their own globe, Earth, shining far through space!

It lighted the cave with a mellow glow. It shone upon the closed eyes of the sleeping girl, and touched lightly upon the rounded softness of a lovely face beneath a tangle of brown curls. Harkness stared long and soberly at the picture she made, and he thought of many things.

No parasite upon society was this girl. He had known such; but her ready wit, her keen grasp of affairs, had been evident in their talks on the journey they had made. They had stamped her as one who was able to share in the work and responsibilities of a world where men and women worked together. Yet there was nothing of the hardness that so many women showed. And now she was altogether feminine, and entirely lovely.

Not far away, Chet Bullard was sleeping heavily. His hand, injured painfully when they tore it from the clinging mass, had been bandaged by Diane. It troubled him now, and he flung one arm outward. His hand touched that of the girl, and Harkness saw the instant quiet that came upon him at the touch. And Diane—her lips were smiling in her sleep.

They had been much together, those two; theirs had been a ready, laughing comradeship. It had troubled Harkness, but now he put all thought of self aside.

"This trip," he thought, "can end only in disaster—if it has not already done so. What a fool I was to bring these two!" And: "If I want to risk my own life," he told himself bitterly, "that's my own affair. But for Chet, and Diane, with their lives ahead of them—" His determination was quickly reached.

He would go back. Somehow, some way, he would get them to the ship. They would return to Earth. And then . . . His plans were vague. But he knew he could interest capital; he knew that this new world, that was one great mine of raw metals, would not go long unworked. The metallic colorations in rock walls and mountains had fairly shouted of rich ores and untold wealth.

Yes, they would go back, but he would return. He would put from his mind all thought of this girl; he would come back here prepared for conquest. He put aside all speculation as to what other horrible forms of life the little world might hold: he would be prepared to deal with them. But he still wondered if there were people. He had hoped to find some human life.

And this hope, too, left him; his sense of this globe as an undeveloped world was strong upon him. The monsters; the tropical, terrible vegetation; the very air itself—all breathed of a world that was young. There had not been time for the long periods of evolution through which humanity came.

He tried to tell himself of the wealth that would be his; tried to feel the excitement that should follow upon such plans. But he could only feel a sense of loss, of something precious that was gone. Diane—named for the moon: she seemed more precious now to the lonely man than all else on moon or Earth. She could never be his; she never had been. It was Chet upon whom the gods and Diane had smiled. And Chet deserved it.

Only in this last conviction did he find some measure of consolation during the long night.

"We will rip the big web out with detonite," Harkness told the others when morning came. "But I want to get the spider, too."

A touch upon the web with a stick brought an instant response. Again they saw in all its repulsiveness the thing that seemed a creature of some horrible dream. The eyes glared, while hairy feelers seized the web and shook it in furious rage. Harkness, fearing another discharge of the nauseating, viscous liquid, withdrew with the others far back in the cave.

"Wait," he told them. "I have a plain."

The creature vanished, and Harkness went cautiously forward to the

web. He took a detonite cartridge from his belt and placed it on the floor close to the ropy strands. Another, and another, until he had a close-packed circle of the deadly things. Then he placed a heavy, metallic piece of rock beside them and proceeded, with infinite care, to build a tower.

One irregular block upon another: it was like a child at play with his toys. Only now the play was filled with deadly menace. The stones swayed, then held in precarious, leaning uncertainty; the topmost was directly above the cartridges on the floor.

"Back!" he ordered the others, "and lie flat on the floor. I must guess at the amount of explosive for the job."

Chet and Diane were safe as Harkness weighed a fragment of metal in his hand. One throw—and he must not hit the tower he had built . . . The rock struck into the network of cords; he saw it clinging where it struck, and saw the web shaking with the blow.

Over his shoulder, as he ran, he glimpsed the onrush of the beast. Again the eyes were glaring, again the feelers were shaking furiously at the web. They touched the leaning stones!

He had reached the place where Chet and Diane lay and saw the beginning of the tower's fall; and in the split second of its falling he threw himself across the body of the prostrate girl to shield her from flying fragments of stone. A blast of air tore at him; his ears were numbed with the thunder of the blast—a thunder that ended with a crashing of stone . . .

Slowly he recovered his breath; then raised himself to his feet to look toward the entrance. It would be open now, the way cleared. But, instead of sunlight, he saw utter dark. Where the mouth of the cave had been was blackness—and nothing else!

He fumbled for his flash, and stood in despairing silence before what the light disclosed.

The rock was black and shining about the mouth of the cavern. It had split like glass. In shattered fragments it filled the forward part of the cave. The whole roof must have fallen, and a crashing slide above had covered all.

Chet was beside him; Harkness dared not look toward the girl coming expectantly forward.

"We'll use more of the same," Chet suggested; "we will blast our way out."

"And bring down more rock with each charge," Harkness told him tonelessly. "This means we are—"

Diane had overhead. Harkness' pause had come too late.

"Yes?" she encouraged. "This means we are entombed—buried here? Is that it?"

Her voice was quiet; her eyes, in the light of the little flash, were steady in their look upon the man who was leader of the expedition. Diane Vernier might shudder with horror before some obscene beast—she could tremble with delight, too, at the sight of some sudden beauty—but she was not one to give way to hysteria when a situation must be faced. No despair could be long-lived under the spell of those eyes, brave and encouraging.

"No," said Walter Harkness: "we will find some way to escape. This is blocked. We will follow the cave back and see where it leads. There must be other outlets. We're not quitting now." He smiled with a cheerful confidence that gave no hint of being assumed, and he led the way with a firm step.

Diane followed as usual, close to Chet. But her eyes were upon their leader; they would have repaid him for a backward look.

To a minerologist this tunnel that nature had pierced through the rock would have been an endless delight, but to a man seeking escape from his living tomb it brought no such ecstasy. The steady, appraising glance of Harkness' was everywhere—darting ahead, examining the walls, seeking some indication, some familiar geological structure, that might be of help.

He stopped once to kick contemptuously at a vein of quartz. Three feet in thickness—and it crumbled to fragments under his foot to release a network of gold.

"Rotten with it," he said.

And the only comment came from Chet: "A fat lot of good it does us!" he replied.

The cavern branched and branched again; it opened to a great room higher than their light could reach; it narrowed to leave apertures through which they crawled like moles; it became a labyrinth of passages from which there seemed no escape. Each turn, each new opening, large or small—it was always the same: Harkness praying inaudibly for a glimpse of light that would mean day; and, instead—darkness!—and their own pencil of light so feeble against the gloom ahead . . .

VIII

"THE VALLEY OF THE FIRES," Harkness was to call it

later, and shorten it again to "Fire Valley." This misty smokes of a thousand fires rose skyward from the lava beds of its upper end.

Where the lava flow had stopped and the lower valley began, came vegetation. Sparse at first, then springing to luxuriant growth, it contrasted strongly with the barren wall beside it and the equally barren waste of high ground where the fires were.

Mountains hemmed it in; their distant peaks showed black, with red and green striations of mineralized deposits. The valleys about them were dense with foliage, a green so startling and vivid as almost to offend the eye.

Trees were in the lower end of the valley. They were of tremendous growth, and the dew of early morning dripped from them like rain. Trunks smooth and ghostly white, except where the bark had split into countless fractures and the scarlet color of the sap-wood showed through. Outflung branches forked to drop down dangling stalks that rooted again in the ground; these made a forest of slender white supports for the leafy roof—a forest of spectral shapes in a shadow world. Only here and there were arrows of sunlight that pierced the dense foliage above to strike through and down to the black earth floor and the carpet of radiant hues.

And that carpet of radiant colors was trampled into paths that wound on to lose themselves in the half-light of that ghostly world.

From one of the paths came sounds of trampling feet. Cries and snarling grunts resounded through the silence to send lizards scurrying to the safety of the trees. Animal cries or hoarse voices of men—it would have been difficult to tell which. And a sight of the creatures themselves would have left an observer still in doubt.

A score of them, and they walked upright. Some bodies were naked, a coppery-black in color; on others the skin was covered by a sparse growth of hair. Noses that were mere nostril-slits; low foreheads, retreating flatly to a tangle of matted hair; protruding jaws which showed the white flash of canine teeth as the ape-like faces twisted and the creatures tugged at ropes of vines thrown over their shoulders.

The Neanderthal Man had not learned to use the wheel; and these man-animals, too, used only the sheer strength of their corded muscles as they hauled at the body of a beast.

It dragged along the path behind them, rolling at times to show the white of its belly instead of the flexible armor-plating that protected its back. Fresh blood flowed from a wound in the white under-skin; this, and the dripping flints that tipped their spears, told how death had come.

One curving horn that projected from a wrinkled snout caught at times in the undergrowth, and then the ones who dragged it would throw themselves upon the head with snarls of fury and twist the big horn free.

The rocky cliff was honeycombed with caves. A cry, half-human in its tone, brought an avalanche of figures scurrying forth. Children, whose distended abdomens told of the alternate feasting and hunger that was theirs, were cuffed aside by women who shouted shrilly at sight of the prize. Older men came, too, and in a screaming mob they threw themselves upon the carcass of the beast that had been dragged into the open.

Flint knives came into play, then sharpened stakes that were thrust through the bleeding meat. Young and old seized what they could, leaped across the little stream that trickled downward through the valley, and raced for the nearest fires.

The fumaroles make places for roasting, and these half-men had learned the taste of cooked meats. Their jaws were slavering as they waited. The scents were tantalizing.

A hunter was reaching to snatch a shred of half-cooked meat when a woman of the tribe gave a scream that was shrill with fear. She pointed her gnarled hand upward on the face of the cliff.

An opening was there, a black cave-mouth in the black cliff. Above their own caves, was this higher opening, yet they must have explored it often—must have followed it as far as they dared, where it led to the mountain's innermost depths. Yet from this familiar place there stepped forth an apparition. Another followed, and another—three strange creatures like none the savage eyes of this world had ever seen.

Clothing torn to rags—faces black and smeared with blood—hands that reached groping and trembling toward the light, until the half-blinded eyes of one saw the trickling brook.

Then, "Water!" he croaked in a voice hardly more human than the grunts of horror from below, and he took the hand of another to help in the steep descent—while the tribe beneath them forgot their anticipated feast, forgot all but their primordial fear of the unknown, and with startled cries, broke and ran for the safety of the forest. . . .

IX

IT IS DOUBTFUL IF WALTER HARKNESS heard or consciously saw that fleeing tribe. He saw only the glorious sunlight and its sparkling reflection upon the stream; and in his nostrils was the scent of roasting meat to rouse him to a frenzy.

For seven Earth days he and Chet had kept account of the hours. How long after that they had followed their stumbling course he could not have told. Time ceased to be measured in hours and days; rather was it reckoned in painful progress a foot at a time up rocky burrows, helping, both of them, to ease the path for the girl who struggled so bravely with them, until aching muscles refused to bear them further. Then periods of drugged sleep with utter fatigue for an opiate—and on again in hopeless, aimless wandering.

And now, the sun! And he was plunging his head into icy water to drink until he strangled for breath! He knew that Chet and Diane were beside him. A weak laugh came to his lips as he sat erect: the girl had drunk as deeply as the rest—and now she was washing her hands and face.

The idea seemed tremendously amusing—or was it that the simple rite indicated more than he could bear to know? It meant that they were safe; they had escaped; and again a trifle like cleanliness was important in a woman's eyes. He rocked with meaningless laughter—until again a puff of wind brought distinctly the odor of cooking food.

A hundred feet away, up higher in the valley, were the first of the fires. Harkness came to his feet and ran—ran staggeringly, it is true, but he ran—and he tore at some hanging shreds of smoking meat regardless of the burn. But the fierce gnawing at his stomach did not force him to wolf the food. He carried it back, a double handful of half-cooked meat, to the others. And he doled it out sparingly to them and to himself.

The cold water had restored his sanity. "Easy," he advised them; "too much at first and we're done for."

He was chewing on the last shred when a thought struck him; he had been too stunned before to reason. For the first time he jerked up his head in startled alarm. He looked carefully about—at the meat on its pointed stakes, at the distant fires, at the open glade below them and the dense jungle beyond where nothing stirred.

"Cooked meat!" he exclaimed in a whisper. "Who did it? This means people!"

The memory that had registered only in some corner of a mind deeper than the conscious, came to the surface. "I remember," he said. "There were things that ran—men—apes—what were they?"

"Oh, Lord!" Chet groaned. "And all I ask is to be left alone!" But he wearily raised himself upright and verified the other's words.

"They ran toward that opening among those trees. And I'll bet they live in these caves up here behind us. I got a whiff of them as we came past: they smelled like a zoo."

They had come out on top of the lava-flow, close to its end. The molten rock had hardened to leave a drop of some forty feet to the open glade below. Beyond that the jungle began, but behind them was the lava bed, frozen in countless corrugations. Harkness rose and helped Diane to her feet: they must force their aching muscles to take up their task again.

He peered up the valley where a thousand fires smoked. "That stream," he said, "comes in from a little valley that branches off up there. We had better follow it—and we had better get going before that gang recovers from its surprise."

They were passing the first of the fires where the meat was smoking when Chet called a halt. "Wait a bit," he begged; "let's take a sirloin steak along—" He was haggling at a chunk of meat with a broken flint when a spear whistled in and crashed upon the rocks.

Harkness saw the thrower. Beyond the lava's edge the jungle could be seen, and from among the spectral trees had darted a wild figure whose hairy arm had snapped the spear into the air.

There were more who followed. They were sliding down the slender trunks that supported the branches and leafy roof high above the ground. To Harkness the open doorway to the jungle seemed swarming with the monkey-men. The movement of the three fugitives had been taken as a retreat, and the courage of the cave-dwellers had returned.

Harkness glanced quickly about to size up their situation. To go on was certain death; if these creatures came up to meet them on the lava-beds, the end was sure. The escarpment gave the three some slight advantage of a higher position.

One vain wish for the pistol now resting in the deep grass beside a vanished ship; then he sprang for the weapon that had been thrown—it was better than nothing—and advanced cautiously to the lava's edge.

No concealment there; no broken rocks, other than pieces of flint; a poor fortress, this, that they must defend! And the weapons of their civilization were denied them.

Another spear hummed its shrill song, coming dangerously close. He saw women-figures that came from the jungle with supplies of weapons. Short spears, about six feet long, like the one he held. But they had others, too—long lances of slender wood with tips of flint. Thrusting spears! He had a sickening vision of those jagged stone heads ripping

into their bodies while these beasts stood off in safety. It was thus that they killed their prey. And Diane—he could not even spare her—could not give her the kind oblivion of a mercy-shot!

The other two were lying beside him now at the edge of the sloping cliff. The bank of shining gray was not steep; the enemy would climb it with ease. Hopeless! They had won through for this! . . . Harkness groaned silently in an agony of spirit at thought of the girl.

"Oh, for one detonite shell to land among them!" he said between clenched teeth—then was breathless with a thought that exploded within his mind.

His fingers were clumsy with haste as he fumbled at the head of the spear. The sharp-edged stone was bound to its shaft with sinew, wound round and round. The enemy were out in the open; he spared an instant's look to see them advancing. A clattering of falling spears sounded beyond, but the weapons were overcast, thanks to the protection of the rocky edge.

"A shell! "Give me a cartridge from your belt, quick!"

Chet handed him one. Harkness took one look, then pulled a cartridge from his own belt.

"That explains it," he was muttering as he worked, "—the big explosion when I smashed the rocks. You've got ammunition for your pistol, but you put rifle cartridges in my belt—and service ammunition at that. No wonder they raised the devil with those rocks!"

His fingers were working swiftly now to bind the slender cartridge to the spear. A chipped out hollow in the flint made a seat. He gave silent thanks for Chet Bullard's mistake. Chet had slipped; he had filled Harkness' belt with ammunition that would have been useless for the pistol—but it was just what he needed here.

So intent was he on his task that he hardly heard the yelling chorus from below. It swelled to a din; but his work was finished, and he looked up.

One figure in advance of the rest had been urging them on, and they came in a wild rush now. Walt Harkness scrambled to his feet. Tall and sinewy, his broad shoulders, scantily covered by the rags of blouse that remained, were turned sideways as he raised the spear. The yelling from below swelled louder and more shrill.

This strange one from another tribe—he was unarmed except for one of their own spears. The curious covering on his body was flapping in the breeze. Nothing here, surely, to hold a hunting-tribe in check.

The spear rose slowly in the air. What child of the tribe could not

have thrown it better! They came on faster now; the leader had almost reached the place where the spear was dropping down. He must have laughed, if laughter had yet been born in such a breast, at the futile weapon dropping point first among the rocks.

One little shell, a scant three inches long, no thicker than the stylus on milady's desk! But here was service ammunition, as Harkness had said; and in the end of the lead a fulminate cap was buried—and a grain of dense, gray dust!

There was no flame—only a concussion that cracked upon one's ears, and flying rock fragments that filled the air with demoniac shrieks. And then that sound was lost in the shriller cries of terror and pain as the ape-men broke for the trees.

Harkness saw some of them who rose and fell again to rise no more, and one who dragged himself slowly from the blast that had struck him down. But his eyes came back to another spear in his hands, and his fingers were tearing at the sinew wrapping.

The spear bent in his hands; the wood was flexible and springy. It was Diane who offered the next suggestion. She, too, was working at another spear—what wonder if her breath came fast!—but her eyes were alight, and her mind was at work.

"Make a bow!" she exclaimed. "A bow and arrow. Walter! We are fighting primitive men, so we can't scorn primitive weapons." She stopped with a little exclamation of pain; the sharp tip of the flint had cut her hand.

Chet's spearhead was unloosed. He tried the spring of the shaft. "Bully girl, Diane!" he said, and fell to gouging out a notch with the sharp flint near the end of the shaft.

The sinew made a string. Three slender sticks lying about whose ends had been sharpened for use on the meat: they would do for arrows. Each arrow must be notched and headed with an explosive shell, and there were many of them.

Chet sprang to his feet at last. Forgotten was the fatigue that had numbed him. A wild figure, his clothes in rags, his short, curling hair no longer blond, his face a mottling of brown and black, where only here and there the white skin dared show through—he executed an intricate dance-step with a bed of lava for a floor, while he shouted:

"Bring on your fighters! Bring 'em on! Who's going to stop us now?"

They were free to go, but Harkness paused at a renewed screaming from the jungle. Again the hairy ones poured forth into the open glade.

He had half raised his bow, with arrow ready, before he saw that this was no attack.

The screams merged discordantly with other sounds—a crashing of uprooted trees—a chorus of harsh coughing—snorting—unrecognizable noises. And the people were cowering in terror.

They half-ran toward the safety of their caves, but the throwers of thunder, the demons on the lava bed, were between them and their homes. They turned to face the jungle, and the wild sounds and crash of splintered wood that drew near.

Harkness saw the first head that appeared. He stared in open-mouthed amazement at the armored monster. Thick plates of shell covered its mammoth body and lapped part way over the head to end at beady, wicked, red eyes on either side of a single curved horn.

An instant the animal waited, to glare at the cowering human forms it had tracked to their lair; others crashed through beside it; and in that instant Harkness recognized the huddled group below as brothers. Far down they were, in the long, weary path that was evolution, and hardly come as yet to a consciousness of self—but there were those who leaped before the others, their long spears couched and ready; they were defending the weaker ones at their backs; they were men!

And Harkness was houting as he raised his crude bow. "Shoot!" he ordered. "Kill the brutes!" His own arrow was speeding true.

The rush of mammoth beasts was on as he fired, but it was checked as quickly as it began. An inferno of explosions rose about the rushing bodies; crashing detonations struck two of them down, their heads torn and crushed. Between the helpless, primordial men and the charging beasts was a geyser of spouting earth and rocks, through which showed ugly heads and tremendous bodies that wheeled and crashed madly back into the jungle growth.

Harkness suddenly realized that only he and Chet had fired. Diane's bow was on the ground. He saw the girl beside it, sitting upright; but her body was trembling and weaving, and she was plainly maintaining her upright posture only by the greatest effort.

He was beside her in an instant. "What is it?" he demanded. "Are you hurt? What is it?"

She raised her hand that he might see; her lips seemed almost too numb for speech.

"Only a scratch," she whispered, but Harkness saw her eyes glazing. He dropped to his knees and caught her swaying body in his arms.

"A scratch," she repeated in a fading voice, "from the spear . . . Poison . . . I think."

A head appeared over the lava crest. Harkness saw it vaguely. He knew that Chet had the newcomer covered; his bow was drawn. It meant nothing to him, for Diane was wounded—dying! Dying, now, in his arms . . .

The ape-man came on; he was grovelling upon the ground. He was hairless, like the one they had seen escape the attack of the giant bat, and his cheek was slashed with a healing cut that might have been made by a ripping talon. He abased himself before the awful might of these creatures who had served them. And he made motions with his arms to picture how they had sailed down from the skies; had landed; and he had seen them. He was plainly petitioning for pardon and the favor of these gods—when he dropped his animal head to stare at the girl and the cut hand that Harkness held in his.

The blue discoloration of the wound must have been plain in its significance. The hairless one sprang abruptly to his feet and darted toward a cave. He was back in a moment, and, though he approached with wriggling humility, he reached the girl and he ventured to touch the discolored hand with a sticky paste. He had a gourd that he held to the girl's lips.

Harkness would have struck it away; he was beside himself with grief. But Chet interposed.

"Give it to her," he said in a sharp, strained voice that told of his own dismay. "I think the beggar knows what he's about. He is trying to help."

The lips were lax; only a little of the liquid found its way down her throat. But Harkness, after minutes of agony, saw the first flutter of lids that betokened returning life . . .

X

HARKNESS WOULD NEVER forget the helpless body in his arms, nor the tender look that came slowly to the opened eyes that gazed so steadily into his. And yet it was Chet that she seemed to want for the thousand little services during the week that followed. And Harkness tried to still the hurt in his heart, and he told himself that it was her happiness he wanted more than his; that if she found greater pleasure in having Chet near, then his love was unworthy if it placed itself as a bar to that other happiness.

He talked by signs with the hairless one whom he called Towahg. It was the sound the other made as he struck upon his chest. And he learned that Towahg could guide him to the ship.

The tribe had left them alone. Only Towahg seemed inclined to friendliness; and Harkness frequently saw the one who was their leader in ugly, silent contemplation of them when Towahg brought food and water to their cave.

Diane was recovering, but her progress was slow. She was able at once to walk and go slowly about, but the least exertion tired her. It had been a close call, Harkness knew, and he realized that some time must pass before she could take up the hardships of the trail. And in the meantime much might happen.

He felt that he must reach the ship at the first possible moment and return for the others; Towahg would show him the way. He explained the plan to Chet and Diane only to meet with emphatic dissent.

"You would go alone?" the girl exclaimed. "To meet heaven knows what dangers? No, no, Walter; you must not! Wait; I am stronger; I can go soon, I know."

Chet, too, was for delay—Diane *was* better, and she would improve steadily. They could carry her, at first. But Harkness looked at the jungle he must penetrate and knew that he was right.

He gave Towahg a bow and arrows like his own and those that Chet kept for defense, but the arrows were of sharpened wood without detonite tips. He grinned toward Chet as he showed the savage how to handle the marvellous thing.

"We've advanced these people a thousand years in the science of arms," he said. "They should make Diane their first Minister of Munitions, or worship her as their own lovely goddess of the chase."

A weapon that would throw farther than the strongest man could cast a spear—here was magic indeed! And Towahg knelt and grovelled on the ground at his benefactor's feet.

Harkness made light of the dangers he must face, but he knew in his own mind he might fail. And the time of leaving found him curiously depressed. He had gripped Chet's hand, then turned to Diane for what might be a last good-by. The quick enfoldment of her soft body in his arms was as unpremeditated as the kiss he placed upon her lips . . . He swung away abruptly, and fell in behind his guide without a word. The way led first across the place of smoke and fire.

Danger ahead on this strange trail; he knew it well. But he took it as it came; and his guide, and his crude weapon, and his steady eye

and sureness of foot on rocky crags all saw him through. And he mentally mapped the hills and valleys and the outcrops of metals that he would explore some later time. Only seven of the short six-hour days of this little Earth had passed when he drew near the ship.

He was ready for an attack. There was the broken rubble that marked the entrance of the cave. Beneath it, he knew, were mangled, horrible remains. This one beast alone, it seemed, had been the ruler of the valley, for no other appeared.

The mass that had blocked the doorway was crystalline now, and broke to brittle fragments at a blow. He entered the familiar cabin of the ship. There was nothing disturbed; the sealed inner door had barred entrance to any inquiring beasts.

Far down the valley he saw a naked, running figure. Towahg had escorted this sky-god to the great bird that had brought him, but the courage of even so advanced a tribesman as he must have limits. He was still running along the path they had come when Harkness closed and sealed the door.

There was an instrument among their stores for taking samples of gas. Harkness attached it to the ship before he left, and he took a few precious minutes for a flight into the heights. That gas up there was fatal to the monsters of space: he must secure a sample and learn its composition.

A closing of the switch on wires that led to the instrument outside, and he knew that the container had emptied its contents of water, drawn in the gas and sealed itself.

Then the swift descent.

He flew low as he circled back. They had traveled far on their journey below ground; it was even a longer route where he and Towahg had circled about. But it was the only route he knew; he could take no chances on a short-cut and a possible long-drawn search for the little valley.

He followed the trail. The quick dusk was near; but in an hour's slow flying, while his eyes searched the hills and hollows, the valley was in sight.

He came down slowly in a black sky, with only the soft, muffled roar of the lower exhausts. It was growing dark, and he leaned from an open door to see more clearly his position. All was different from the air, and he needed time and careful scrutiny to get the bearings of the place.

The soft thunder from below was in his ears when a sound pierced

through. His own name! And it was Diane's voice calling him in a terrified tone.

"Walter!" she cried. "Help! Help! Oh, Walter, come quickly!"

The scene below was lighted by fitful fires. He was above the upper valley, a hundred yards from their cave: his mind was oriented in an instant, and he knew each foot of ground.

And here, where neither Diane nor Chet should be, was Diane. He saw her running in the bright glare of his landing light that he now switched on; saw a black shape hurl itself upon her; she was struggling. He threw himself back at the controls to send the ship like a thunderbolt upon the earth.

A pistol was in his hand as he leaped from the still-rocking ship and threw himself upon the thing that ran and tried to carry a struggling burden in its arms.

He could not fire; but he brought the pistol down upon a heavy skull. The hairy figure seemed never to feel the blow. It dropped the body of Diane and turned, and its slavering, shining fangs were set in a horrible face that Harkness recognized.

It was the leader of the tribe, and he had dared to attack. But where was Chet? What of his arrows and their detonite tips? These thoughts were crowding through his mind in the instant that ape-like fingers gripped at his throat—the instant while he was bringing the pistol forward and up.

A light charge of detonite in pistol ammunition—but no living body could withstand the shock. Harkness leaped over the fallen foe to reach the girl. She was half risen to a sitting posture as he came.

"Dieu!" she was whispering; *"Ah, le bon Dieu!"* Then she cried out: "Walter! Oh, Walter, they have killed Chet! Down there!" Her hand was pointing. She grasped at Harkness' hand to draw herself to her feet and race with him toward the cave.

"Just at dark," she explained gaspingly as they ran. "It was their chief, and there were others with him. They leaped upon Chet—before he could reach for his bow. They had seemed so friendly after you left—but they were short of food—"

Her voice was sobbing now, but she kept on, and she set a pace that Harkness could not outdistance.

"One aimed a spear at me, and Chet threw himself between. I saw the spear strike—then I ran. I thought I heard your motors—I screamed for you—"

They were nearing the caves. A fire was burning in the open glade

where grotesque figures leaped and danced in cannibal glee about a figure that lay motionless upon the ground.

The tattered, wind-blown clothing—the curling hair, blond in the fire's light—it was Chet . . . And now Harkness could fire.

His pistol held twenty rounds. He emptied it into the shrieking group, then jammed in more of the shells and fired again. He fired until no target remained, and every savage figure was either vanished among the trees or inert and lifeless upon the ground, their only motion the stirring of their hairy coverings in the breeze.

Harkness was beside the prostrate figure. He raised Chet's head within his arms; Diane's brown head leaned close, her gasping breath broken by dry sobs. The firelight flickered upon the closed lids to give them semblance of life.

"Chet," said Walter Harkness softly. "Chet, old man—can't you speak? We'll save you, Chet; you're not done for yet." But he felt as he spoke that the words were a horrible lie; the blood that ran slowly now from a wound in Chet's side seemed to speak more truly than did he.

Yet Chet Bullard opened his eyes. His breath was the merest flutter; the listeners bent their heads close to hear.

"Made it, did you?" asked Chet in a ghastly whisper. "And you've saved Diane? . . . Good! . . . Well, it's been a great trip . . . It's been worth the price . . .

Harkness seized at the girl's name. Here was something that might strike home to the sinking man; might rouse him.

"Yes, Diane is saved," he told Chet: "saved for you, old fellow. You must live—for Diane's sake. You love her, and she needs you."

Again the tired eyes opened. Once more the fluttering breath formed words; lips moved to bring a pale ghost of Chet's ready smile like a passing light across his face.

"Needs me? Diane?" It was a question and a denial. He was looking straight at Harkness as he added: "It's you she needs . . . You're one square old sport, Walt, but dumb—awfully dumb . . . "

Glorious adventure!—and the price is so often death. "A great trip," Chet Bullard had said; "it's been worth the price." Chet was prepared to pay in full.

But—there was the ship! Walt Harkness, as she finished bandaging the body of the unconscious man, stared first at the metal cylinder, gleaming, brilliant in the Earthlight; then his gaze went to Earth that had risen

over distant peaks with the glory of a thousand moons. And he dared to hope.

He brought the ship softly to rest close to where Chet lay, then placed the limp form on the self-adjusting floor of the control room. There must be no shifting of the body as the pull of gravitation ceased. Soft blankets made a resting place for him.

The entrance port was closed and sealed; and the ship rose gently under his touch. And, below them, the mirrors showed a world that sank away. Diane's head was pressed near to his to watch that vanishing world.

Each rugged mountain was softened in the Earthlight's mellow glow; they melted together, and lost all sharpless of form. And the light faded and vanished as they rose into the blanket of gas that blocked off the return rays and made of this world a dark moon.

No regret now for the territory that was unexplored. Harkness told himself he would return. And, with the vanishing of that world his thoughts were only of the little flame of life that still flickered in Chet's body, and of Earth, and of the metal ball that was swinging them out and away . . . The sound of the stern exhaust built up and up to the roaring thunder that meant the blast was opened full . . .

XI

UNMOVING, THEIR SHIP SEEMED, through the long hours. Yet there were lights that passed swiftly and unnoticed, and the unending thunder from the stern gave assurance that they were not floating idly in the vast sea of space.

The sun was behind them, and ahead was Earth in midday glory; Harkness could not tear his eyes away from that goal. He stood always at the controls, not because there was work to be done, but for the feeling it gave him of urging the ship onward.

Diane ministered to Chet and dressed the wound. There were few words exchanged between them.

The menace that had emptied Earth's higher levels of all aircraft was still there. No ships were in sight, as Harkness guided his ship toward the great sphere. His speed had been cut down, yet still he outraced the occasional, luminous, writhing forms that threw themselves upon them. Then the repelling area—and he crashed silently through and down, with their forward exhaust roaring madly to hold them in check.

A sea and a shoreline, where a peninsula projected like a giant boot—and he knew it for Italy and the waters of the Mediterranean.

"Vienna," Diane was telling him; "go to Vienna! It is nearby. And I know of a surgeon—one of the greatest!"

And an hour later, a quiet, confident man was telling them: "But yes!—of a certainty he will live. It is fortunate that you were not very far away when the accident occurred." And only then did Harkness catch Diane's eyes in an exchange of glances where unbearable relief was tempered with amusement.

The great hospital had its own landing stages on its broad roof. Their ship was anchored there, an object to excite the curiosity of a gathering throng.

"Not a healthy place for me, here in Vienna," Harkness remarked. He was lifting the ship from its anchorage, its errand of mercy done.

"Now where?" he pondered aloud. The strain of the flight was telling on him.

The girl recognized the strained look in his eyes, the deep lines that their experiences had etched upon his face. Gently she drew his hand from the controls.

"I will take it," she said. "Trust me. Lie down and rest."

Harkness had witnessed an example of her flying skill; she could handle the ship, he knew. And he threw himself upon a cot in the cabin to sink under the weight of overpowering fatigue.

He felt the soft shock of their landing. Diane was calling him, her hand extended to lead him from the open port. But he was wrenched sharply from the lethargy that held him at sight of his surroundings, and the memories they recalled.

They were in a park, and their ship rested upon a spacious lawn. Beyond were trees where a ship had shot crashingly through storm-tossed limbs. And, before him, a chateau, where a window had framed the picture of a girl with outstretched arms.

"Trust me," Diane had said. And he did trust her. But did she not know what this meant? She was delivering him into the enemy's hands. He should have kept himself from sight until he had rallied his forces. . . He was stammering words of protest as she led him toward the door. Armed guards were already between him and the ship.

In a dark-panelled room Herr Schwartzmann was waiting. His gasp of amazement as he sprang to his feet reflected the utter astonishment written upon his face, until that look gave place to one of satisfaction.

"Mademoiselle," he exclaimed, "—my dear Madamoiselle Diane! We had given you up for lost. I thought—I thought—"

"Yes," said Diane quietly, "I believe that I can well imagine what you thought."

"Ah!" said Herr Schwartzmann, and the look of satisfaction deepened. "I see that you understand now; you will be with us in this matter. We have plans for this young man's disposal."

The puzzled wonder that had clouded the steady eyes of Walter Harkness was replaced by cold anger and more than a trace of contempt.

"You can forget those plans," he told Schwartzmann. "I have plans of my own."

"Poof!" exclaimed the heavy, bearded man. "We will crush you like that!" He struck one heavy fist upon the desk. "And what will you do?"

"Several things," said Harkness evenly. "I shall rid the upper levels of the monsters: I have a gas that will accomplish that. I shall restore the world's flying to normal. And, with that attended to, I will give you my undivided attention—raise forty kinds of hell with Herr Schwartzmann and the interests he represents.

"Forgery! Theft! The seizing of my properites by virtue of a lying document! You shall see what this leads to. Your companies will be wrecked; not a decent man or woman engaged in the business of a decent world will deal with you: that is a small part of what I plan."

The dark face of Herr Schwartzmann was flushed with anger. "You will never leave this place—" he began. But Harkness would not let him go on; his voice was as hard as the metal of his ship.

"You and your assassins!" he said contemptuously. "You don't dare touch me. There is another man who knows—and Diane, too." He paused to look into the eyes of the girl, which were regarding him with an inscrutable expression. "I do not know why she brought me here, but Diane also knows. You can't throttle us all."

"Diane!" The exclamation was wrung involuntarily from Schwartzmann's lips. "You speak of Madamoiselle Vernier so familiarly?"

The girl's cool voice broke in. She had watched the meeting of the men in silence; she spoke now as one taking matters into her own quite capable hands.

"You may omit the incognito, Herr Schwartzmann," she said; "it is no longer required. I have enjoyed a birthday since last we met: it was passed in a place of darkness and anguish, where strong men and brave forgot their own suffering to try by every means to bring

comfort to a girl who was facing death. For that reason I say that I enjoyed it . . . And that birthday was my twenty-first. You know what that means.

"But Madamoiselle Vernier—pardon!—Mam'selle Delacoeur, surely you will support me. My trusteeship during all these successful years—"

"Is at an end," said the cool voice.

"I learned more than you were aware of in this last year while I familiarized myself with the interests that would soon be mine. No, Herr Schwartzmann, your methods do not appeal to me; they are an anachronism in the world of today."

Harkness was standing in stunned silence. "Delacoeur!" Diane was Mademoiselle Delacoeur! But that name had been borne by the wealthiest house of France! Old Delacoeur had died, possessed of millions beyond counting—and he had left a daughter—Diane!

His mind could not grasp the full significance of this. But one thing was clear: he could not aspire to the love of one of the queens of Earth. Whatever faint hope that remained in his heart was lost . . . The cool voice was still speaking.

"You may leave now," she was saying—this girl who had been his comrade, so unfailingly tender, so true and steady in the face of incredible dangers. And Herr Schwartzmann took his dismissal as one who cannot dispute his superior.

The room was silent. Harkness stood with downcast eyes that followed with meticulous precision the intricacies of design in the rug on which he stood. A voice was speaking. Not the cool, imperative voice of Mademoiselle Delacoeur, mistress of vast estates, but the voice of Diane—the Diane he had learned to love—and it tore at his emotions until his mind was a whirl of conflicting thoughts.

A tender voice; and there was laughter in it and in the eyes that his own came despondently to meet.

"Such a man, this Walter Harkness!" she was saying. "So hard, so vindictive! Ah, the trouble he will make for me because of my conscienceless agents!"

Harkness threw out his hands in a helpless gesture. "Don't taunt me," he said. "You know you have me tied. You've drawn the charges from all my guns. There is nothing to be done."

Diane Delacoeur drew near. The raillery was gone from her voice, and the hand that she placed on his arm was trembling.

"Nothing?" she inquired. "Then, if friendly rivalry is impossible, would you consider, could there not be arranged—a merger of our

interests? I am not thinking now of wealth, of which you will have far more than I: there are so much greater things in life—"

The eyes that clung to his were pleading now. And within them was the light that Walter Harkness at last could understand and define. He took the trembling hand in one of his that was suddenly strong, and with the other he raised a lovely face that no longer dared to meet his look.

"You mean—" he began, and fumbled for words to express an emotion that was beyond words. "Chet said—why, he said—that you needed me—"

Her reply came mingled with a tremulous laugh.

"I have the greatest regard," she whispered, "for Chet's judgement. But—do you—need me?"

Walt Harkness held the soft body close; bent nearer to catch the words. And he answered them with his own lips in an ecstasy of emotion that made nothing of the thrills to be found in that other conquest—of a Dark Moon.

The sequel to this story, *Brood of the Dark Moon,* is at least twice as long as the first story, and ran as a four-part serial in *ASTOUNDING STORIES,* August, September, October, and November 1931. We could not run it thus in *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION;* however, it might be possible to rework the four installments into a series of four novelettes. *If it is possible,* would you like to see them here? The question is on the Preference Page this time; and while I cannot make an absolute promise, if a substantial majority of you, the active readers, would like to see it done, I'll see if it can be done. It would be foolish to start such a project without your prior approval.

The final story in the trilogy is one which can be presented complete, as is, for it is no longer than *Dark Moon.* You will have noticed a reference to a man named Haldgren, who was believed to have been lost. *The Finding of Haldgren* is Chet Bullard's story, taking place after *Brood of the Dark Moon,* which rounds off the unfinished business between Walt Harkness, Diane Delacouer, and Herr Schwartzmann, with Bullard intimately involved.

GUEST EDITORIAL

On Today's Science Fiction

Art or Artiness?

by LESTER del REY

This is the full working text of the speech that was prepared for delivery at the 26th annual World Science Fiction Convention, on September 4, 1967.

WHEN I BEGAN WRITING science fiction thirty years ago it was fun to write and fun to read. It had no other delineated purpose than to exercise the imagination in a game where wild ideas were the pieces and the sum of knowledge was the gaming board. It remained honest to that purpose for another decade, to produce the "golden age" of our literature.

But times and egos change. Today we have grown too "mature" for mere delight. We have acquired social significance and laid siege to the mainstream. Now science fiction, according to many in the field, must be an art-form and its writers should be artists. Art, of course, is a good thing; and artists, so I am told, must be judged on intent, rather than achievement alone. Nobody has yet told me why this should be, naturally. But the old ways of story telling and the rules of craftsmanship are being shoved aside by the new dicta of art.

I've heard all this before in other fields where art has been used as a cop-out by incompetent craftmen; sometimes even men of dedication

and conviction have labored tragically after art to produce no more than artiness, which is defined as a showy imitation of art. Hence, I reserve my applause for this new science fiction fad until I can be sure the product justifies the label. I still believe that only men who produce real art have the right to call themselves artists.

The dictionary confuses art with skill—perhaps inevitably. However, we have a legacy of millenia of great art and numerous comments by the artists; from a study of these works and words, we should be able to derive some criteria.

The foremost requirement of art is passion—not compassion, which is a poor, condescending thing, but a burning passion of some kind which affords an inner illumination. This passion must not only go into the work; *it must come out,* to affect the reader and to evoke a strong emotional or intellectual response. The ability to *transfer* passion through his medium is the unique and subtle skill of the artist. Without it, intent means nothing. A bad artist is not a real artist at all, but a self-deceiving fool.

Other virtues are needed, in varying degrees. A major virtue is integrity; the artist must not evoke his response by pandering to the lower limits of his audience, but must strive to the limits of his own horizons. There should be a maxium appeal to full perception, so that the work can live and grow with the reader's experience. There must be sufficient thought and organization to give it a relatedness of impact and a conclusion at the peak of the intended—and fulfilled—effect. And some economy (but not parsimony) of means is desirable, since an assault on the reader by overstatement and repeated effects soon blunts the perceptions.

Ideally, there should be a very high level of skill. Style, for instance, should be appropriate and effective, but controlled. A clumsy sentence or an inaptly clever phrase interrupts the inner integrity of the work; and if repeated, such improprieties may completely destroy the link between writer and reader.

Art makes no unnecessary concessions to weakness. The real artist must only take the easy way out when that is the best way; his command of his medium grows only with the requirements he makes of himself. One of the strengths of art is originality. To some extent, of course, all work is derivative; but in real art, that element is subordinate to the originality in conception, so that the work has a totality of its own. Otherwise, like a clever art fake, it contributes nothing.

Little of the early work of science fiction can be called art. That isn't too surprising, since very little of the work in any field justifies that term. But it had enough integrity not to pretend it was anything but what it was. It made no pretension of being art. Nevertheless, many of the stories held a quite respectable number of the elements of art to a fair degree.

When, I turn to the recent work that is presented by its admiring claques as art, I'm in another world. Pandering is treated as integrity; dispassion as passion; weakness as strength. It is almost as if the writers had tried hard to produce anti-art!

One of the criticisms against older science fiction was the absence of real characters, a cliche easy to mouth by anyone who has dutifully listened to college professors when he should have been reading Heinlein. Of course, fiction is not supposed to produce *real* characters, as any perceptive critic should know; writing is supposed to be creative, unlike routine journalism, and a writer's job is to create characters, not to report. A good fictional character is a distillation, not a blood sample. But in any event, the new writing supposedly has changed all this and is giving us real characters.

I've never found any memorable ones, but I have analyzed the ones I can find possessing any traceable characteristics. What I discover is simply that the too-strong hero of old has been replaced with the hopelessly-weak anti-hero today. Courage, intelligence and dignity have been dropped away. Instead, we have a sickening morass of petty people and unpleasant characters to follow, even in stories where such people could not possibly have worked their way up to the positions that face them with the future situations.

This is the opposite of reality. In real life, men do somehow solve their problems and face up to their needs. America did get settled against some tough odds, men did give up their lives for others. We are sending men out into space, and those men do have courage, intelligence and dignity; the ones who come after them in the future world science fiction describes will also have a good measure of such virtues, along with their faults.

It isn't reality or integrity these writers are using. Instead, they're using a cheap excuse for doing lazy work. It's always much easier to give a semblance of reality to weakness or evil than to strength and decency. When a man sacrifices his life for another, the situation is real enough, but hard to make convincing without careful development; but when he quits under pressue, all that is needed to make him sufficiently weak is to fail to characterize him. A good act runs the danger of senti-

mental handling; but nobody seems to notice that a bad act is also sentimental in an opposite way.

It takes a full man and a competent writer to handle characters during the stress of crisis whose goals can be achieved only by the highest of human efforts. And at least many of our older writers were such men; they had already proved their fullness in real life before they ever turned to writing. It was only after they had made a successful attack on their own personal goals that they found the leisure to turn to the hobby of science fiction as more than readers.

But today, a great many of our writers are only that and nothing more. They have moved from the college writing class to the too-easy sales of stories without any need to rub against the real world of action under stress. They are empty men, and the only reality they can fully know is the pettiness their characters display.

To know everything about writing and know nothing else is to know nothing about writing.

The lack of completion is shown in every aspect of these stories which slavishly use every formula element of what they were told was art.

There is an intense anti-rationality in many of the newer stories. This is the opposite of reality, of course, for any field which attempts to depict the future of our race. Only by the application of the most severe rationality (with an infusion of poetic insight in the best cases) can we hope to fill in and flush out what is to come. And the history of the human race is a long but exceedingly slow triumph of rationality over its opposite, so common sense dictates that more rationality rather than less belongs to the worlds of science fiction.

But it's far easier to write about doomed worlds -- worlds doomed by stupid accidents and irrational ones. A hole in the bottom of the ocean will do, unless one knows something about the globe on which we live. And it's easier to depict the ugliness of man's reaction than to try and get something done about it. If a writer knows little about people and their reactions in real emergencies, he probably believes it is more honest.

The truth is that the human animal responds rather superbly in crises, as numerous reporters have testified. Ugliness does exist, but its examples are in the minority among a large majority of amazing instances of human nobility.

But reality has nothing to do with the new writing's preoccupation with ugliness and defeat. It is simply much easier to let a story run down hill than to bring all the elements that have strained against each other under some measure of final control and make it convincing. A lot of

ideas don't shape up easily; to get them into a meaningful pattern takes a hell of a lot of hard thought and of vicarious emotional response. It takes integrity to see the need of such work. And if the incompetent or lazy writer can palm off his half-considered work as superior to what his professor sneeringly referred to as "good story", he naturally takes the easy way out and the warm glow of being above the mere plotters.

In the final justification, he can always fall back on the nonsense of unconscious symbols. Somewhere, buried in the words, must lie the great idea he once thought he had. Let the reader dig out its significance by studying the symbols for greatness. Don't ask the writer to do anything so difficult as think it through and then state it. The conscious control of symbols is a tool that takes hard work and care.

So plotting has become absent or simplistic, and its absence is excused with the general concept that some kind of significant message is more important than a mechanical plot. (All elements of writing are mechanical. Even style is nothing but the mechanical use of verb after subject, adjective before noun. The job of the writer is to take the machinery and use it so well that its operation is never noticed.)

I have no objection to messages, though I prefer to do my own message writing in non-fiction, where I can work them out in detail, rather than to attempt proving them by make-believe situations. I don't even object when Heinlein puts his personal messages in his fiction, however; I often find it highly entertaining.

But I do object to having the tired and ancient messages of the mainstream slightly twisted into the future and then handed to me as if they were something deep and important to me. I read those messages in the books long years before most of these writers were forced to study them as examples in school.

And therein perhaps lies the deepest fault I find with much of the new writing. It is totally, completely lacking in even the slightest trace of originality, while it claims to be something new and revolutionary. It has borrowed almost every cheap trick from the mainstream as taught today, and has simply imported those tricks to science fiction. The characters, messages, plotless stories and attention to failure and ugliness are not new, but merely something old and borrowed.

They haven't even been reshaped enough to make them fit properly into science fiction, but have been tossed in by the lump.

The works I see as examples of this new art fail to show one acceptable, even though minor, example of artistic criteria. Certainly the men who write them don't deserve yet to call themselves artists.

Above all, the artist must not confuse his means with his ends. Style and other skills are tools with which he can shape whatever his inner vision demands, and he uses them with care and respect—but always as tools. In fact, art may itself be only a tool to the artist. A great deal of medieval art was meant as a passionate tribute to the glory of God, and its artistic power was a necessary means to that end; the cry of "art for art's sake" would have been properly considered the plea of a self-serving poppinjay.

In this respect, artiness is the complete antithesis of art. Artiness is almost always the result of mistaking the means for the end, usually because there is no real end to be served. Whenever I hear experimentation, innovation, inventiveness, style, taboo-breaking, avant-gardism, or the use of shock subjects and words being discussed as the aims of the writer, rather than as technical means, I know I am in the presence of artiness, and no art will come of it.

Until recently, the most common mistake has been the treatment of style as a virtue of itself. "Forget my story—I know it's weak. But what about my *style?*" is the cry of the hopeless amateur. And bad teachers and workshops pander to him endlessly, probably because it is so much easier to analyze words than what lies behind them.

But style is *not* the man, or I should suffer a severe shift of personality whenever I write in German. It is not even the story. A witty style serves well in a story of wit, but would ruin a tender tragedy of love among the young. Attempted brilliance on an empty story is like the passions of a harlot, and can only disgust anyone of reasonable sensitivity. And "poetic" prose, gushed over by the spuriously appreciative, is only slightly less revolting than prosy poetry.

Currently, the most common abuse of style is the overuse of what is meant to be cleverness in phrase or treatment. At best, cleverness is a small virtue in creativity, akin to cunning in the lower ranks of business. At its worst, it is a contrivance for the narcissistic gratification of the writer and the plaudits of his mutual-admiration group. Unfortunately, it seems to be habit-forming, and usually progresses rapidly to its worst.

Innovation is neither good nor bad—it is merely necessary to the writer who has something genuinely new and different to say. The search for it as an end in itself is one excellent way to prevent the mind from finding anything to say that merits it.

On the other hand, inventiveness is an excellent device in the hands of a good writer. It can create details of background, add insight to a

character, and provide numerous incidents and incidentals that delight the reader and develop the story. But when used to excess, it can force the story out of its course in a search for nothing but inventions. A recent novel much praised by one writing group was so loaded with inventions without relation to anything that there was no room for the story to develop, if there ever was a story idea under it. This is simply bad design. It's like putting bracelets and a mink jacket on a poodle.

Experimentation is not even a means, much less an end; it is an attempt to find a means—or should be—by which a writer can turn a difficult idea into a good story. It has no virtue in itself, but can be judged only by the success of the story. Success is never noticed; only when the story fails can it be spotted as experimental.

I've never tried to do an "experimental" story, but I've spent thirty years experimenting for ways to tell a good story. I've written a story over and over from different viewpoints—and learned thereby how to choose a viewpoint. I've tried everything from attempting to do an *honest* second-person story to devising science fiction based on strict Freudian theories. I even tried once to trick the reader into believing a story solved when I couldn't find a solution; that dishonest but interesting failure was entitled *Moon-Blind,* if anyone is curious.

My toughest job was trying to reverse plot and story line. A plot is a structure of related events happening to people before the reader. This should be based upon a fully understood story line in the writer's mind, which is everything significant that lead up to, shapes, and grows out of the events of the plot.

In *Keepers of the House,* the rather banal plot deals with a disastrous experiment in broadcast life-energy. This is barely hinted at, while the effects of the story line are brought forward to occupy full attention. There is no true event or character in the story—just a non-humanized dog serving as a traveling viewpoint to survey the story line.

The ten years of thought I spent on that doesn't increase my artistic stature one iota; but it does give me a somewhat less than awed view of the dabbling in experimentation some writers boast about. Nearly every writer I've known has experimented – though in the old days they didn't talk incessantly about it or feel all their failures deserved publication simply because they were experimental.

The other subjects beloved of some newer writers are even harder for me to understand. I grew up to the realization long ago that not only is there no evil in certain four-letter words but there is also no magic virtue in their use. Everyone knows most of them and most people

use some of them at times. Probably all of them are now between the covers of best-sellers. So why does it seem daring to supposedly mature men to get the words into the magazines? How can such a minor violation of the general rules of good taste enhance art?

I am also amazed that some writers spend so much attention on the subject of editorial taboos. A taboo, of course, would be very gratifying in providing an automatic alibi for the rejection of the writer's latest masterpiece. But what and where are these alleged taboos? I can't find them, and I'd like to; a list of taboos would provide me with excellent material for story plots for the next year or so.

When I ask about what taboos are meant, I'm usually told that sex is one of them. Well, thirty years ago my second story dealt with a human male and a female device (or robot) who got married. It was plain she was equipped for normal marital activities, but since my narrator was not present during any, I didn't describe them. Nevertheless, this violated religious taboos. Twenty years ago, I wrote a story in which the hero raped the heroine on stage and she found she enjoyed it. The editor didn't even mention it, but simply printed the story. I won't twist any story out of shape to get sex into it, but I've never kept it out when it belonged — and I have never had any magazine reject any story with sex in it!

I haven't tried a story of cannibalism, because it isn't very practical; Peary's expedition proved that men who eat others die of protein poisoning before the non-eaters can starve to death. But I've read such stories. I have tried all kinds of stories dealing with religion in taboo fashion — and they've been printed and even reprinted in Italy and other Catholic countries, as well as in our magazines.

There are no taboos. There are simply some subjects that are more difficult to develop into interesting stories for our field or require greater skill to handle interestingly. I suppose most of the editors do have taboos against dull subjects or ones which require more skill than is possessed by the writer. I hope so.

Being avant-garde is another goal which seems to hold some mysterious allure today. The term implies no degree of quality or art, but only that the writer may be a fore-runner, one leading the field in using an idea or technique. Most avant-gardists have been very bad indeed, and the real work was done by others with more ability who could develop the rough germ of the idea. Also, there is no way of telling what particular pseudopod from the main cell will turn out to be the real fore-runner;

for every one that is, probably a hundred turn out to be sterile or abortive.

Anyhow, most critics and many writers are crying today that the art of fiction is in a decline, retreating from its greatness. In a retreating art-form, where does one find the fore-runner?

The writer must not be wholly blamed for aping art with mere artiness, however. There is such a thing as an arty critic—in fact, there are a legion of them filling the schools, writing the book columns, and teaching young writers what to feel and think. Whether the academic study of literature breeds them or they are drawn to the field, their ranks are swelling. They pry into literature without passion of their own and unable to sense it; being unable to respond to real art, they can retain their expert standing only by selling a false art as the real thing—something which they can be taught to understand.

Until a couple of decades ago, their pernicious influence was felt only on the mainstream. But when science fiction became somewhat respectable, they moved into the field. Without bothering to gain any real understanding of this new branch of fiction—if most were capable, which I doubt—they simply plastered the weary slogans of their trade across it and demanded that the bug-eyed monster become a properly oppressed member of a minority race.

A writer so empty of inner convictions about his chosen field that he could be swayed by such authorities seems one hardly capable of producing competent writing, much less art. Yet it was inevitable that that many of the impressionable younger men, and some of the older writers who were hungry for wider acceptance, should fall into line in return for the chance of being recognized as artists. The weight of the preaching was all on the side of these new authorities, and most of the major reviews in the press were in their hands.

The real experts (including a few from academe, like C. S. Lewis) were too busy having fun reading and writing science fiction to draft a counter-credo. It has still not been drafted adequately, though it is long overdue. The virtues and values of honest science fiction have permitted it to survive for forty years in a chaotic market that has killed most other categories and has created a fandom and reader loyalty unique in popular literature. It deserves a careful analysis by men who understand it.

It deserves the best for what it is—not the worst for what some hope it can become as a means to their ends.

The Eld

by MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD

It was unheard-of for the Eld of a Province to die so young.

"BUT WHO IS THE ELD of this province?" inquired the new Minister of Culture peremptorily. "I can find no record of his name — or hers, as the case may be."

The Provincial Agent cleared his throat. "Unfortunately, Your Excellency," he said, "at present we have none."

"None at all? I never heard of such a thing."

"The Searchers are hopeful of finding a new one soon, Your Excellency. In fact, all signs point to a prospective mother about to give birth."

"But that means it will be twenty years or more before your new Eld, if you find one, can function. How are you going to have any approved art or learning in Rhambaja in all that time? How will you compete in the Annual Exhibitions?"

The Provincial Agent sighed. "We shan't," he said unhappily. "We shan't be able to."

"This is most distressing," said the Minister. "A nice way to begin my administration, I must say. What happened to your former Eld — what was his name — let me look at the report —"

"His name was Ogardon. And he is dead."

"But he can't be! He couldn't have been a real Eld; your Searchers must have made a frightful mistake. No true Eld dies before his successor is ready to take his place."

"No, Your Excellency, he was indeed a true Eld. His exercise of his powers proved that. But he died — shall we say prematurely? Six months

ago. I confess"—he dropped his voice apologetically—"I made no mention of it to the former Minister. We were hoping we could—kind of slide by, unnoticed, until we had a functioning Eld again: Rhambaja is such a small province. We had not anticipated the change of Ministry. For the better, of course," he added hastily.

The Minister ignored that. "What happened?" he demanded.

"Well, Your Excellency, it was partly because of the disputed territory between Rhambaja and its next-door neighbor, Pangoria—"

As is well known, Elds are not made, but born, like the Dalai Lamas of earlier times. The Searchers *are* made—that is, they are trained to recognize the signs that the infant a pregnant woman will bear will be an authentic Eld. Never in history have two Elds been born in the same province at or near the same time—that (or so the priests tell us) is proof that Elds are divinely created; and so is the fact that—until now—no province has failed to have a younger Eld waiting to take over when his senior dies. But neither had any Eld before this died—prematurely. The Provincial Agent shuddered away from the word to describe what really had happened.

If the provinces hadn't carried on that petty quarrel about boundaries—if Ogardon hadn't been so unEldlike in his private life—if Cortias the actor hadn't been so headstrong—

The Eld's function is to pass upon and authorize all works of art or learning—painting, drawing, sculpture, musical composition and execution of all sorts, dancing, acting, every variety of serious writing in prose or verse, even to doctors' theses and textbooks. He or she is a combined judge and censor. But his rulings are based not on the subject-matter—that is as free as the wind—but on the objective excellence of the work in its own genre, no matter how far out that may be. Nothing can be presented at the Annual Exhibitions, the most important national event of the year, without the Eld's endorsement. No one can qualified as a cultural worker, and hence subsidized by the state, unless he is approved by the Eld. In a country like ours where the standard of education and culture is the highest source of national pride, the Eld is an extremely important official—more important, in domestic affairs, than the government itself. The Eld's prestige and influence are beyond any question.

But his power is much greater than that. The final proof that an infant is a true Eld is that anyone who presents a specimen of art or learning so unqualified that the Eld condemns it utterly is risking his life. For the genuine Eld has venomous saliva, established by chemical test.

To be spat upon by an Eld means instant death. It is the rarest but most terrible of events.

We have often been asked by members of other nations which do not possess our unique system why the Eld is not poisoned by his own secretion. The answer is that he would be, if he swallowed his saliva. From birth every Eld is fitted with special cheek pads to absorb the secretion of his salivary glands, and is trained also to eat and drink through a tube so that he cannot accidentally kill himself.

If Ogardon had not been born an Eld, he would undoubtedly have been an actor. His judgings were dramatic affairs, and he welcomed most eagerly the chance to judge an artist of the theater. Unconsciously he must have felt a certain envy and jealousy of actors that never filmed the objectivity of his judgment of an author or a painter. An actor or actress had to be very sure of his or her worth to invite Ogardon's verdict.

And Cortias was proud and touchy—and fanatically patriotic.

Cortias had been born and reared in Pangoria, in a hill town near the Rhambaja boundary. When he was a boy of 15, his home and the country around it had been declared by the Council to belong to the neighboring province. This was in the year of the great Rectification of Boundary Lines, when modern technologists surveyed the entire nation and corrected the ancient errors of the original geographers. Cortias was just at the age for romantic, insular patriotism. He had been a Pangorian; now the national government told him he was henceforth to be a Rhambajan. Never, in his heart, he vowed with all the ardor of 15; he would always hate Rhambaja and everyone in it. He joined a small, young, noisy but futile group which secretly wore the symbol of Pangoria, the red poppy, under their jackets and over their hearts.

It was therefore unfortunate that, five years later, when he was just beginning to find his place in the theater, he fell desperately in love with an 18-year-old beginning actress in his company who was not only a Rhambajan, but who happened also to be Ogardon's first cousin.

There is no law forbidding Elds to marry, but they seldom do. Their strange power absorbs them, and most of them, men and women alike, end up as priest-like celibates. But they *are* men and women, perfectly normal except for their divine gift, and there are always exceptions: there is even, in history, an Eld whose successor was his son.

Ogardon was one of the exceptions. And the girl on whom his own heart was set was that same Klavda—a little flirt who favored now her cousin, now her colleague.

You see the dilemma facing Ogardon. The time of the Annual Exhibitions was approaching. As Eld, he must judge, objectively and impartially, all the practitioners of all the arts who achieved sufficient recognition to offer themselves for auditions. Cortias had so qualified, with what mixed motives only he could know. Probably he never intended the actual judging to take place, but was bent chiefly on publicity for himself and his cause, for he suddenly announced publicly, after the date for his judging had been set, that on consideration he had decided that his local theater was actually still affiliated with Pangoria, not with Rhambaja.

That was a challenge that Ogardon could not, in his position as Eld of Rhambaja, ignore or yield to.

You can imagine the scene. Cortias was appearing in that old classic, "Summer Is Ending." There was a large and eager audience, for rumor about Cortias's imbroglio with Ogardon had been flying around for weeks. And scattered through the theater were the poppy-wearers, Cortias's fanatical fellow-members of the Pangorian Claimants, who cared nothing for the personal rivalry of the two men over Klavda, but were vociferous in their insistence that the Eld of Rhambaja had no right to judge their native son.

The Eld, as is customary, was seated in the right-hand lower box. The play came to its end, and the cast was called back for ten tumultuous curtain calls before Cortias himself asked the audience to quiet down. Under ordinary circumstances, the fact that Cortias was plainly the people's darling would have meant nothing whatever to Ogardon—so great is the reverence for the Eld that the most violent partisans change their opinions quickly when they are at variance with his.

But here . . .

He left the box and came through the right wing to the stage. Cortias, a bit pale under his makeup, stood waiting for him; the remainder of the cast was lined up in the rear. Klavda was among them; she had a minor part in the play.

The old ritual began. "I, Ogardon, Eld of Rhambaja, am come to judge you, Cortias, for appearance as a representative of the acting profession at the Annual Exhibitions."

It got no farther. Cortias was a good actor; his voice did not tremble. He said firmly: "I do not recognize you, Eld, as my judge. This ground on which we stand is rightly part of my native province of Pangoria. I appeal to the Eld of Pangoria to judge me, as is my right."

The Eld of Pangoria, needless to say, was discreetly absent.

Ogardon held his anger. Behind Cortias's instransigence, he well knew, was their rivalry for the girl.

"This territory, Cortias, has for ten years been legally part of Rhambaja. It is under my jurisdiction. If you aspire to the Exhibitions, you must submit to my judgment."

"I refuse," said Cortias stubbornly.

If that had been all that was between the two, the issue might have been settled by diplomacy. There were other actors in other theaters to be judged for the Exhibitions. Ogardon could have told Cortias that he must then withdraw his offer and wait another year, and meanwhile appeal to the Council for a formal ruling which he might or might not accept, but which would be final.

But not with Klavda watching and listening.

And Klavda chose this moment of impasse to thrust into the public eye—not, one may be sure, out of love for either man, but solely in the interest of her own building career. Darting suddenly from place in the line against the backdrop, she dashed forward, threw her arms around Ogardon's neck and (face forward and voicethrown to reach the gallery), cried: "Dear cousin, don't pay any attention to this nonsense! Qualify Cortias, and you'll see—he'll accept your judgment."

She could not have done anything more calculated to make both men furious. They were both in love with her, but she had publicly humiliated them both—wrecked Cortias's masculine pride and his integrity as a Pangorian claimant, with his colleagues present; mortally offended Ogardon's sacred dignity. He tore her arms away, and for an instant there was a gleam of understanding sympathy in the eyes of both the actor and the Eld.

(Turn Page)

An Unforgettable Novel Of An Experiment Upon Eight Million Human Guinea Pigs

THE ABYSS
by David H. Keller, M.D.

is in the September issue of

MAGAZINE OF HORROR

Klavda had created an impossible situation. Now, if Ogardon ordered Cortias to appeal, everyone would ascribe it to weakness and cowardice. If he ignored Cortias's protest and accepted him for the Exhibitions, it would be thought due to subsevience to the girl. And if he condemned him, it would be considered a cruel personal revenge.

For the first time in history, an Eld had been openly deprived of his divine impartiality. Cast and audience waited in shocked silence.

There was only one thing left for Ogardon to do.

He tore out his cheek pads, convulsively swallowed his own saliva, and fell dead on the stage before all the horrified eyes. Klavda bust into hysterics.

"So there, Your Excellency," said the Provincial Agent sadly, "is the whole distressing story."

"How in heaven's name could you keep it secret?" asked the Minister of Culture.

"I was there myself, of course. I appealed at once to our good Rhambajans not to let the rest of the country know our shame. I secured a personal pledge from every man and woman pesent that no word of ths disaster would ever leak through them to any representative of public communications. Even the pressmen gave me their word and kept it—they were Rhambajans too.

"And let me tell you the one good thing that came of this catastrophe, Your Excellency. Cortias himself, stunned and frightened, came forward and begged his fellow-rebels to join in the pledge. More, he plucked a red poppy from under his costume and threw it down and cried: 'No territorial claim on Earth is worth so terrible a price! I renounce my allegiance to Pangoria; it has caused an unforgiveable sacrilege!'

"They say the cleaners found crushed poppies strewn all over the floor after the sobered audience had gone. I hear the Pangorian Claimants disbanded soon afterward."

"But the police—"

"Sir, the suicide of an Eld could not be a police matter; it was the concern of the priests, and they of course helped me to keep the whole dreadful business quiet. They sent out Searchers at once, and as I told you, we have hopes of success very soon. If Rhambaja's absence from the Annual Exhibitions for some years to come arouses comment, there is nothing we can do, with your permission, but say humbly that we had no one worthy of appealing. Our abasement must be the penance for our disgrace."

The Minister of Culture looked confused. He felt there was something he should do or say, but he was too new and inexperienced to know what. The Rhambajans had got away with it for half a year; perhaps the best thing was to leave the responsibility on the long-time Provincial Agent's shoulders. He himself could always deny that he had learned the truth, and face down the Agent if he protested. In fact, he reflected with increasing cheerfulness, this would be very useful information if, as sometimes happens in governmental circles, he needed to apply a bit of refined blackmail at any time on Rhambaja.

But he was human as well as an official, and he could not resist his curiosity. "Tell me," he said in a friendly tone which both reassured and warned the Provincial Agent, "what has become of the actor—Cortias, is it?—and the girl?"

The Agent sighed. "Cortias was a very talented young actor," he said. "He would have been an ornament to our national culture. But he left the stage forever—these excitable young people take things very hard. I understand he is studying for the priesthood."

"And Klavda?"

The Agent looked embarrassed. "Klavda is—in retirement at present. Nobody knows for sure who the father is, but— She is the prospective mother I spoke of, who very soon should give us our new Eld."

Did You Miss Our Earlier Issues?

#6, Spring 1968: *The Hell Planet,* **Leslie F. Stone;** *The Individualists,* **Laurence Manning;** *More Than One Way,* **Burt K. Filer;** *The Invulnerable Scourge,* **John Scott Campbell.**

#7, Summer 1968: *Men of the Dark Comet,* Festus Pragnell; *The Elixir,* Laurence Manning; *Away From the Daily Grind,* Gerald W. Page; *The Fires Die Down,* Robert Silverberg; *Not By Its Cover,* Philip K. Dick.

Order From Page 128

The Eternal Man

by D. D. SHARP

Old Zulerich grew no older; his project was successful; but . . .

HERBERT ZULERICH WAS A big, heavy-framed man with a tangled mop of shaggy hair which lay back from his sloping forehead and clustered about the collar of his dark coat. His nose was big and prominent, swelling like a huge peak upon his face, and his mouth was a deep-lined canyon between the peak of his nose and the bulge of his chin.

Zulerich's habits were as strange as his face, and ponderous as his big body. How he lived no one knew, and no one knew either how he managed to maintain the formidable array of test tubes, and retorts. In his laboratory was every conceivable kind of peculiar glass, holding liquids of all colors.

DRURY D. SHARP, made his debut in the April 1929 issue of *WEIRD TALES,* with *The Goddess Of The Painted Priests,* but most likely most science fiction readers knew him only as D. D. SHARP, under which name he first appeared in *SCIENCE WONDER STORIES* with the present tale. It was very well received, and remained on many fans's "best" lists for long years thereafter, thus meriting the term "famous", as applied to old-time science fiction, even though today's astute reader will notice some flaws which hardly anyone did at the time.

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Zulerich had, at one time, been a chemist of somewhat more than local fame, but of late years he had become a recluse, staying alone most of the time in his big stone house just back of the highway where the constant stream of autos seemed to disturb him but little.

In truth they disturbed him a great deal. Some days he would watch them in their hurry as they drove furiously along the straight line of paved roadway, and into his face would come gloom and melancholy. And into his large blue eyes would come a hurt look; a feeling of sympathy for those who seemed so full of life, so fey, so thoughtless.

"Death! Death!" the old man would whisper. "Man goes through long years of preparation for the few days of accomplishment before the conqueror destroys all."

"So much preparation," he would whisper as he shook his big head. "So many brilliant minds polished and blazing for an hour, like roses grown and tended to be cut for an evening's bloom; hands so skillfully trained, and so soon folded quietly at rest."

That he was in quest of some great secret, everyone who knew him had long ago suspected. But what that secret was, no one knew and few could even guess.

The truth was that Zulerich's mind was obsessed by a single thought — the appalling waste of death. And since science and invention were conquering the other enemies of man's existence, Zulerich set out after the example of Ponce de Leon to discover the elements which might be combined to give eternal life.

Strange as it may seem, Zulerich was making some progress. He had found out some things which had astonished him. Some of his experiments had awed and stupified him and then he made a discovery which gave him a decided fright.

He had been experimenting with unicellular organisms, and had found that they did not behave as inorganic chemicals did. He knew that the reaction of those animalcules as distinctly physiological and not merely physical organic and not purely chemical. They did not resemble any known chemicals, for they reacted as individuals and not as mere materials. This discovery, he found, was confirmed by Jennings in his book, *Behavior of Unicellular Organisms.*

Old Zulerich had studied the intricate processes of cellular division and multiplication, hoping to penetrate the law of the organism and discover what it was that, at the peak of growth, prevented further cleavage of the cells. In short, he wanted to find the principle which confined the limits of size and growth. Find what it was that caused the cells

of a living body to increase and multiply until maturity and then cease growing except when incited by a cut or other accident to the tissue. Why should a cell become active to replace wounded flesh, yet balk at rebuilding vital tissues, such as the lungs; or refuse to replace a lost tooth more than once?

He experimented in numerous ways to provoke cell growth, trying to divine whether they had individualities of their own or whether they were bounded by the individuality of the whole. He wanted to find whether cells had an intelligence which caused them to do the remarkable things necessary to their co-ordination in the body.

Zulerich found out many things; stupendous, mystfying things, which no amount of scientific theory could possibly explain. He perfected chemicals which applied to a rabbit's head caused its hair to grow so long as to make it necessary for him to gather it into a bag. And even then the weight of it grew so great the rabbit could no longer drag its load and he killed the animal out of mercy. But still its hair grew and grew. His high-walled backyard soon held some monstrous freaks from his chemicals; dogs with heads as big as water barrels and bodies of normal size, and rats with bodies as big as cows and small peanut-sized heads. And one day he applied a chemical to a horse's eyes and the eyes grew out of their sockets like long ropes of white sinew with great knobs of gelatine-like iris — limp flabby canes which dragged upon the ground. The effect of this last experiment so cut the kind soul of Zulerich that he killed the monstrosities and wished to abandon the whole business. Then he would look again from his window over the wide world where death laid waste, and he would sigh and tighten his lips to plunge ahead again.

Growth was not what Zulerich wanted. He was quite content that man should retain his present stature. What he desired was to increase man's years.

And then he discovered it. He did not need to prove the experiment by waiting and watching until the end of time to find out whether the cells would eventually die. He knew they would not die. A few drops of pale green fluid in the graduating glass in his hand would permit any man to live eternally. He knew this was possible for he had at last found the combination he sought; the chemical which continued life without the necessity of decay.

After a year of experiments upon his cells he tried a drop upon a rat. He caught the rat in one hand and held his medicine dropper with its pale green fluid in the other. But, as the dropper released its globule,

the rat moved its head and the drop hit the side of its face and spread about its throat. It left a scar upon the hair, a peculiar scar like a question mark. Zulerich tried again with a second drop with better success. The rat swallowed it.

Zulerich watched carefully. The animal's heart seemed to cease beating. The lungs became motionless, and yet the rat lived, with a fire in its pink eyes. It lived on, day by day, week after week, month on month, without the slightest loss of weight or sign of hunger or thirst. It lived with its tiny soul imprisoned in it.

Yet even then Zulerich dared not drink his elixir, though his work was exhausting his strength and his heart was very weak and with its flutterings gave him frights at times. There was a flaw in his experiment. The animal lived without breath, food or water, but it was entirely *unable to move!* To see it one would presume it dead except for the fire in its fierce little eyes and its lack of decay.

So Zulerich set out to mend the flaw. He worked feverishly now, for he was a very old man and his heart threatened to fail. He did not want to die with success just within his reach. He did not want to come so near offering mankind the one boon it craved and then to fail.

Two years passed before Zulerich found the ingredient lacking in his pale greenish drops. The thing was so simple he had overlooked it altogether. He discovered it quite by accident.

One day he had a pail containing a solution of washing soda near the window and was washing down the dusty glass so thust he might see out over the blighted world and gain strength from its curse to continue his work. He would allow no one else in his laboratory and washed the windows himself.

A few spattering drops fell into the motionless upturned mouth of the rat where it stood upon the deep casement. Its mouth was open in the same position Zulerich had left it when it when he had forced it to receive the life-preserving drops. It had stood a tiny, paralyzed, living statue in that same attitude for two long years. Zulerich had really thought to remove the animal from the window before beginning to wash them. But as he grew older he had grown more absent minded. He was unable to use the same care and forethought he once had; but this time his carelessness resulted in a great discovery.

Immediately when the soda dropped into the rat's mouth it squealed and scurried for cover. But it soon came out to nibble a crust of cracker the parrot had dropped on the floor.

Zulerich had been overjoyed at the rat regaining the use of its muscles,

but now he became worried and anxious because it developed hunger —this might forebode decay which meant death.

Even as he pondered he trembled, for he knew he was very old and had not much time to watch and wait. And then as the result of his suspense and relief over the new discovery of the soda drops, his heart began fluttering alarmingly. It acted as it had never done before. He thought his time had come to die, and his precious experiment was almost completed, perfected, but not yet given to a life-hungry world.

All the legends he had ever read of the discovery of elixirs of life had had their fruits frosted just before the eating. And so it was to be with him. This was the end. Then he thought of his drops! He would drink them and there would be ample time to conclude his experiment.

He prepared a glass of soda water, then went over to the table and sat upon his high stool. Then picking up the vial of pale green, which had become dusty with its long idleness upon its shelf, he measured his drops. But his hand trembled so that the vial dropped to the floor and spilt its precious fluid. He drank the drops in the measuring glass, then he reached for the soda water sitting just at a touch of his hand.

He could not move! He had forgotten he would be unable to hand the soda to his mouth. For the moment he was too upset and frightened to think clearly. He had overlooked a very vital thing. There was nothing to do but sit and wait for a neighbor to pass. He was as immovable as though cut in stone. He could not move an eyelid. He was very frightened.

A week went by.

During that week the rat played all over the room. One time it came out mockingly upon the table before him. Zulerich regarded it closely. It was not breathing.

Another week passed before anyone came into the house. During this time the rat became bolder and Zulerich had much time to observe it. He knew his experiment had been a success. The rat only consumed food to replace its physical energy. It needed fuel for running about the room, which of course was a method of decay. The rat needed no food to support its life. Zulerich knew he had discovered a great secret. He had accomplished life perpetual which only needed food for its physical energies.

Then a neighbor peeped in. His look of uneasiness gave way to one of pained sorrow. The neighbor's face became melancholy as he saw old Zulerich sitting stiffly upon his stool beside his chemicals. Zulerich tried to cry out, but his voice like his limbs was paralyzed. He tried to croak,

even to whisper, but there was no noise at all. He put his appeal into the fierce, cold fire of his living eyes which were turned straight toward the door. The man saw the eyes, bright and living. He slammed the door and fled the room.

Zulerich created quite a sensation after that. No one knew what had happened to him. They thought he was dead, and surmised that he had spilled some mysterious compound over him which had embalmed him with the look of life in his eyes.

Undertakers came from long distances to study him as he sat in his laboratory. They pried and tested among the fluids in the bottles, and years passed, and still old Zulerich was not buried because they believed he had found some marvelous embalming fluid and he was kept for observation.

Old Zulerich, growing no older, knew all this for he sat there, in a glass case now, and heard all they said and saw before his eyes all that was done.

And in the dead of night the rat with its selfishness and its eternal life, and the unselfish chemist in his glass case, would meet again. The rat would scamper lively across the top of the glass case, in which Zulerich sat as stiffly as though sculptured in stone. It would sit upon the table before him and stare at him with red spiteful eyes, and then scamper away. And Zulerich always knew it by the peculiar scar upon its neck. The rat knew what he lacked. For two long years it had been frozen, as he was now, before he had given it movement as well as life. But it was too mean to do so great a deed to a man. It hated him. It never brought him the few drops of alkali he craved.

One day they packed Zulerick carefully in a case and moved him, and when the case was opened he found himself in a lofty building with the mummy of a Pharaoh on one side of him and musty relics of other ages all around him. He recognized the old building, for in the other days he had loved to potter around there and let his fancies wander and his thoughts seek something tangible in these fragments of a vanished age.

As he sat there upon his stool, protected within his glass case, the unalterable line of his vision vaulted the narrow aisles below him and gazed through the great glass of a tall window in the opposite wall.

Out there he watched the throngs that passed. People of a day. Men who yesterday were babes in mothers' arms, today fighting up the long and difficult ladder for their fragment of success, to leap tomorrow into oblivion at their alloted rung.

Customs changed, women scrambled with the male, and there became

even less time or inclination to enjoy the fruits of preparation. The years of training lengthened.

In all their years upon Earth, it was bound to happen that the two should meet again: the rat with its selfish greediness and the chemist with his unselfish dream. The rat had been seeking him so that it might gloat over him as it used to do. So that it might scamper upon his case and deride him with its motion. But the keeper of the museum saw the rat and beat it with his broom and mangled it with his leather-shod heel. This happened in the night and he left the rat upon the floor until morning so that the cleaners might take it away.

Before the cleaners came the next morning one of the scientists who were studying Zulerich saw the rat lying there upon the floor before the case with its mangled body and its eyes were so bright and full of pain. He stooped to examine it, and his interest became intense, for its heart and lungs were quiet and it seemed quite dead; and yet its eyes had the same living look of the man Zulerich in the glass case.

So the rat, too, was placed under observation and set in a tiny case upon a perch just before the case in which sat old Zulerich looking out upon the great world through the big window. The rat in its case cut off part of the vision of the chemist so that in seeing the world beyond the window he must look straight into the eyes of the creature to whom he had given eternal life, and which had been mangled until it was given eternal pain.

The years passed on, long years, all the longer that there should be no end of them. It was all the sadder that, instead of viewing the misery and waste of eighty years, he must watch it for eight hundred years, and even then not be done.

Life streamed by under his gaze, burning up with decay. Yet he held the secret they so much desired. Between them and eternal life was a connecting link, a few drops of alkaline water. The wires of communication were down and none had the wisdom nor the wit to raise them up. He had the secret, they had the power, if they only knew.

Eager, anxious, weary, discouraged and broken, the people of the world tramped by; torrents of wasted motion. For long years he envied them, of all that waste, the power to say one small word for freedom. For long years the undying man and the undying rat stared hatefully at each other. For long years he studied and contrived within his mind some means for breaking the paralysis of his body so that he might give eternal life to humanity. Then he learned a great lesson from a small child.

The child had discovered the mangled rat and had seen the pain and desire of death in its eyes. She begged her father to kill the little rat as he had killed her little dog after a car had mangled it.

That night Zulerich's eyes softened as he regarded the rat under the bright glow of the electric lights, and in his heart felt remorse. For the first time he was glad that he had not been able to give man his magic formula. He discovered that he should need to improve life before trying to lengthen it.

The Reckoning

Everyone does not take note of the cover, and of course it isn't obligatory; but checking over the votes of those of you who did, I find only one mark of disapproval for Paul's illustration on FSF #6. The (eld?) who spat upon it (the artist not being present) stated that he thought it too similar to the Martian walking machines in H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. Oldtimers will recall that Frank R. Paul depicted these mechanisms on the cover of *AMAZING STORIES* for August 1927, and that there is a certain similarity.

Happily, no one seemed to have felt cheated because there were only four stories in our sixth issue; and since then I've noted more issues of *ANALOG* since 1962, which also had four stories only, than it's worth listing. Not that this makes such a good practice, but at least it's far from unheard-of. And the length of these old stories I seek out for you may require this every now and then.

The third-from last ballot received brought what had been the 2nd place story into a tie with the first-placer; the next two put it ahead. Here is the final listing: (1) *The Individualists*, Laurence Manning; (2) *The Invulnerable Scourge*, John Scott Campbell; (3) *The Hell Planet*, Leslie F. Stone; (4) *More Than One Way*, Burt K. Filer.

The Maiden's Sacrifice

by EDWARD D. HOCH

(author of *The Times We Had)*

While we're not entirely convinced, this is a nice suggestion . . .

NOW IT CAME TO PASS that Cuitlazuma, a wise man of science, became ruler of the great Aztec nation. He had labored long among the scholars of the kingdom, helping to perfect their regulatory calender and to bring a high degree of development to the educational methods of the temple. Now, in the prime of his life, he was to lead his people to even greater levels of accomplishment.

"Tell me, Monto," he asked one day, strolling with his aide near the great temple of Quetzalcoatl, "do you think others live beyond the jungles, across the waters?"

"Surely, yes, Cuitlazuma," the younger man replied. "A whole race of men who will someday come to our shores."

"And destroy all that we have built?"

"Perhaps."

The conversation saddened Cuitlazuma, for he had seen the Aztec nation grow in his own lifetime to its present peak of learning. The highly developed social life of the community was matched by superior educational methods and learned studies in astronomy. The great calendar stones that surmounted their temples—upon which Cuitlazuma himself

had labored—gave mute evidence of the progress of civilization. And yet, the ruler was troubled.

"Monto, we must built against that day—against the day when all this is threatened, when our way of life crumbles." They had climbed to the top of the wide temple steps, and the ruler said, "Look here at what we have—streets and shops and buildings being constructed on every side, the flow of traffic regulated to a high degree. We take a census of our people, and govern them with a wise hand. Are we—and they—to lose all this?"

"Our generations will pass. Our children will die."

"But do they have to, Monto? Do they really have to?" The idea, only now beginning to form, excited him to a high degree. "Monto, call me a council of our wisest priests and men of science. I wish to speak to them."

"On what topic, Cuitlazuma?"

"Ah, on the topic of eternal life, of course."

And so they gathered to speak of it, and the most learned of the Aztec men of science were heard from. After two days of discussing the problem, with all of its religious and medical implications, a decision was reached. Their people died because the heart stopped beating within them. Find a way of keeping the heart alive, and the eternal life they dreamed of would be possible. And with eternal life would go the hope of maintaining the Aztec civilization for all days to come, even against the enemy from across the sea.

"The heart, the heart," Cuitlazuma said. "That is the key to everything. Go among the people, especially the younger people, and find those willing to help us with our experiments."

And after some days a young girl was shown into Cuitlazuma's chamber. She was called Notia and she was very beautiful. "They have explained to you what is needed?" he asked.

"It is an honor to serve my ruler, oh sir."

"You are only a maiden. Do you realize what it is you will be sacrificing?"

"Of course, oh sir."

"Very well."

And so a place was prepared, at the very top of the temple steps where all could see—because Cuitlazuma would not do this thing in secret. The girl Notia was prepared, dressed all in a gown that billowed behind her as she walked.

And on the day when it was to happen, Cuitlazuma spoke with the

doctors and the medical men. And then they were together to visit old Quizal, the woman who was dying. "My heart is worn, oh sir," she murmured from her pallet.

"Woman, we will try to remedy that today."

And later the doctors spoke to Cuitlazuma, because they feared this thing he was about to do. "What if it fails?" they asked.

"Then we will try again. And again."

The doctor nodded. There was nothing more to be said.

And later Monto came to his leader's quarters. "The maiden is prepared. Old Quizal is prepared. You will do it?"

Cuitlazuma picked up the sharpest of his knives, the ceremonial dagger he had never used. "I will do it. Only I should have the responsibility."

"How will you do it?"

Cuitlazuma leaned against the cold wall, resting his forehead for a moment against his arm. "I will cut into her chest as she lies there, and remove the living heart from her body. Then I will place it in the chest of old Quizal, to give her more years of life. The doctors will be there to connect the heart and close the wound."

"If you succeed, Cuitlazume, it will be the beginning of eternal life for our people."

Cuitlazuma nodded and picked up the dagger. It was time to go, to meet with the maiden Notia on the temple steps. "And if I fail what we begin here today . . ."

"If you fail?"

"If I fail, there will be only the deed to be remembered, and not its purpose. And centuries from now some writer of histories will look back and say that the Aztecs practiced human sacrifice."

First Fandom

by

ROBERT A. MADLE

MANY YEARS AGO, at one of the early science fiction conventions, someone is alleged to have written on a wall in the men's room the following dynamic slogan: "First Fandom Is Not Dead!" Apparently, this was inspired by the large number of fans and writers from the earliest days of magazine science fiction who were attending that convention. Science fiction fandom is, indeed, noted for having retained many of the active fans of the 30's, a large number of whom today are the leading editors and writers in the field. To make a point, one needs only to mention such fans of the 30's as Frederik Pohl, Donald A. Wollheim, Robert A. W. Lowndes, Arthur C. Clarke, James Blish, Daman Knight, Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Harry Harrison, Sam Moskowitz—the list is a long one.

Back in late 1958 a group of "old-time" fans met in Bellefontaine, Ohio, to discuss science fiction, talk over the early days, drink a few cases of beer and, in general, spend an enjoyable science-fictional weekend. It was during this meeting that the subject of an organization of, for, and by the long-time readers and writers of s-f was conceived. The idea was to limit the membership to anyone who could show some activity (reading, collecting, writing, corresponding) prior to January, 1938. Obviously, the field was saturated with such people. In addition, a strong effort would be made to contact the old-time fan and writer who had drifted out of the field. It was a known fact that many such former fans never lost their interest in science fiction, many of them continuing to maintain their vast collections. These fans would be welcomed back into science fiction.

An application was drawn up, the preamble of which stated the philosophy of *First Fandom* (for that was the name unanimously accepted for the organization) as follows: "Being a science fiction fan implies something more than being merely a reader of science fiction and fantasy. The outstanding characteristic of a science fiction fan seems to be a desire to communicate with the others of his kind: communication in the form of correspondence, communication through social contacts, and through fan magazines. The more active fans have usually involved themselves in more than one phase of fannish activity."

This early statement still represents, in general, the *First Fandom* philosophy. However, time and experience have resulted in the initiation of several qualifying ideas, such as the acceptance of long-time readers and collectors who, through no fault of their own, never got involved in active fandom. (In reality, becoming an active fan in the 30's was almost a freak of circumstance when it is considered that there were only about 200 active fans out of a readership of 100,000.) Another recent modification was the incorporation of the "Associate Member"—one who doesn't qualify on the basis of pre-1938 activity but who on the basis of his basic interests fits quite neatly into the organization. Frankly, another reason for the Associate Member classification was the agonizing appraisal of the officers that, by the limited nature of its membership. *First Fandom* had become a club consisting almost entirely of leaders! The age and background of the membership resulted in numerous ideas and projects, but with few enthusiastic *workers* to carry through.

What does *First Fandom* do? First of all, it should be realized that *First Fandom* was conceived primarily as a social organization. The intention was to draw together all those whose interest in s-f encompassed the decades from the pulps to the present. Another intention was to reward, through recognition by this large group of "experts" in the field, those few really great writers of science fiction and fantasy whose stories have been the ones upon which all others have been based: the writers who have, in reality, created the field of science fiction. Consequently, the *First Fandom Hall Of Fame Award* was devised. (The trophy devised is a useful one, being a good quality barometer and pen set with a mobius strip superimposed.)

Determining who would be the first recipient of the award was not an easy task. This was decided at the Midwestcon of 1963. *(First Fandom* meetings are held three times a year: at the Midwestcon in Cincinnati, Ohio; at the Westercon in California; and at the Worldcon.) Many people had their favorites, but the one selected was, without a doubt, the man who exemplified what the *First Fandom HOF Award* was meant to be: Edward Elmer Smith, Ph.D. Here was the man who had created the extra galactic, superscientific adventure novel; the man whose first story, *The Skylark of Space,* is considered one of the cornerstones of the entire field of s-f

literature. The next award went to Hugo Gernsback, the man who was responsible for creating the entire field of science fiction; the man who edited and published the first science fiction magazine *AMAZING STORIES.* The third award was presented posthumously to the man who first added characterization and human pathos to the field, David H. Keller, M.D.; the man whose very first story, *The Revolt of the Pedestrians,* ushered in a new type of s-f. The most recent award *(NYCON* III 1967) was presented to the man whose s-f writing has spanned four decades; a man whose versatility in the fields of both s-f and fantasy is unequalled; the "World Saver" himself, Edmond Hamilton.

First Fandom publishes a quarterly organ: *FIRST FANDOM MAGAZINE.* We are very fortunate in having as editor, Lynn Hickman, who is also noted for being editor of that excellent amateur journal, *THE PULP ERA.* FFM features articles and columns stressing, primarily, the early days of science fiction and fantasy. The current issue boasts a cover by Frank R. Paul; several nostalgic articles; a Midwestcon writeup; and the usual features inherent in a club magazine.

First Fandom has an official emblem, too. For this, we went back to the September, 1928 *AMAZING STORIES.* Featured on the cover of this issue is the prizewinning emblem of *Scientifictic n.* It is a shield which shows two gears, fact and theory, meshing with another gear which has moved a test-tube fountain pen to write the word, "Scientifiction." This legendary emblem was used intact, with the words, "First Fandom" added below; it has been made into a colorful blazer or shoulder patch.

This brief article has attempted to present to the readers of *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* the purpose, intent, and a few of the accomplishments of *First Fandom.* It is felt that if you are a reader of *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* (and/or of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* and *STARTLING MYSTERY)* you may very well be qualified to become a member of the organization. In reality, this trio of magazines represents almost precisely what FF stands for. By sheer coincidence, even the reprint policies of FSF coincides exactly with the FF policy of membership: "Prior to January, 1938." Anyone interested is invited to write for an application. The Secretary is Dale Tarr, 6252 Starvue Drive, Cincinnati, Ohio 45211.

Since the above was written, issue #15 of *FIRST FANDOM MAGAZINE* has appeared, reproducing a cover from *TERENCE X. O'LEARY'S WAR BIRDS,* and an article on that brief-lived fantastic magazine by Mr. Madle.

Why The Heavens Fell

by EPAMINONDAS T. SNOOKS, D.T.G.

There is a fundamental flaw in this story, and we'll send a complimentary subscription, starting with the issue wherein we print what the editor considers the best letter delineating the flaw. Meanwhile, here is one of the earliest stories in science fiction magazines wherein the sins of the more sensational and least scientific authors are burlesqued.

HERE IS A CHECK FOR SEVENTY THOUSAND," said the Old Man, that morning in 193-, "I want you to take it personally to old Snigglefizz and, while you're there, see if he has anything new to spring that we can sign him up on—and, for the love o'Mike, don't let him put over any lemon that will set us back like that Aleithograph gadget did. Don't let him give you any song and dance about 'scientific values'; what we want is something that will make good money, like the Zeta Eta. Draw a couple of hundred from the cashier; there isn't much chance to spend money up in that neck of the woods, so you'll go light on the swindle sheet."

I left the office actually with a check for $72,002.50, drawn to the order of Professor Hans von Schnickelfritz, on royalty account. The seventy-two thousand was the quarterly advance on the professor's share of the profits from the Zeta Eta Theta ray machine, which has such

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E. T. SNOOKS, D.T.G.

This story was most controversial when it first appeared, receiving both loud and hilarious applause from those who appreciated what was being done, and indignation from those who thought it demeaned science fiction. It is, of course, an example of the heavy-handed teutonic sort of humor that Hugo Gernsback considered so devastating—he certainly wrote enough of that sort himself. But, everyone wanted to know: "Who is E. T. Snooks?" "What does the 'D.T.G.' stand for?" It transpired that Dr. ? Snooks was C. P.*MASON, associate editor of the magazine, and the letters mean: "Don't Tell Gernsback." Snooks is credited also with *The Monkey Men of Meneginia;* later, some other stories under his by-line did appear ir the magazine.

marvelous power in reducing the symptoms of obesity; and the $2.50 covered the sales of the Aleithograph, whose rays have almost occult power in compelling the person irradiated by them to speak the truth, and nothing but the truth.

This machine, wonderful scientific discovery that it is, had proved salable only to police departments; and, after the courts had granted several injunctions against its use, and numerous damage suits had been filed against us, as its maufacturers, we had reluctantly discontinued the model.

Now it was my assignment to venture into the lair of the eccentric scientist, where he pursued the researches which had proved the total inadequacy of a single Greek alphabet to describe all the rays which he had produced and turned to his marvelous uses.

It was time that some new brainchild of his should reach suitable maturity, to prove an added breadwinner for the professor—to say nothing of the Supernational Electric and Radiation Corporation, one of whose field men I am.

A brief search of the railway guide showed that one lone day-train

crawled its weary way into the hills among which the professor had sought to obtain the privacy so essential to his temperament. From thence I could escape only by a second train, grossly overpraised as an "accommodation," which would return me in time to wish my milkman a cheery good morning as he made the rounds.

It is not surprising, therefore, that I was not overjoyed at the intervening necessity of giving a pair of country cousins a view of the night life of Manhattan—and the consequent opportunity to discourse of the wickedness of our great city for months after their return to Podunk. However, I did my duty as a host with all the courage I could summon up and, with very little rest thereafter, departed on my wearisome journey to the professor's country estate near Rough Neck.

After excruciatingly unsuccessful attempts to repose in a single day-coach, which had been better days during the administration of General Grant, I finally reached the shack which made a pretence of being the grand central terminal of Rough Neck; and induced the owner of a venerable Model T to transport me up a ravine road to the professor's domain at Maxwell Manor. My conductor, however, put me off at the main gate, refusing to venture up the driveway in the face of a large placard which bore the words:

KEEP OUT! DANGER!
60,000,000 VOLTS!
TRESPASSERS WILL BE ELECTROCUTED!

It was evident that the professor's neighbors believed in signs, and I felt half-inclined to agree with them. However, my business errand should be sufficient to protect me against a menace that might appall even a lightning-rod agent: and I picked my way gingerly toward the house, keeping both eyes open to be sure that there were no live wires around me. I glanced over my shoulder, and saw that the driver of my car had ventured to do the same; probably with a view to determining whether there was as yet any news to report to the local coroner.

As I reached the front steps, there came into view a large opening, above which was written in brilliantly-illuminated neon tubes: *Beware the Dog!*

"Where be the dog?" was my unspoken question; and then there emerged into sight, through the opening, a figure, somewhat canine in suggestion, but obviously mechanical. Nevertheless, harmless as its cylindrical iron body and large rubber-tired wheels might be, the sets of

large steel teeth, set around a central frame like that of a lawnmower, had a distinctly menacing look. I had no desire to be converted into raw material for hamburger steak; and the infernal contraption looked decidedly carnivorous.

Undoubtedly it was operated like a televox by some means of command; but I had no idea what the magic signal that would put this Cerberus back in its kennel might be. I thought that, perhaps, to make a noise like ready money would soothe its mechanical growling; but whether the canine robot would recognize negotiable paper, was a subject for doubt. I began backing up, looking for an opportunity to sidestep.

Providentially, however, the professor himself chanced at that moment to appear upon the scene. *"Donnerwetter!"* exclaimed the great scientist: *"Pumpernickel!* Am I forever to be plagued by these *Schweinehunde* of newspaper men? Go away!"

I raised the pink slip above my head and waved it frantically. "Professor!" I cried: "Your money! From the Supernational!"

"Stand where you are!" he commanded: "Give it to Tauser, and he will bring it here."

With trepidations as to the bankability of the check after the operation, I entrusted it to those iron jaws; the mechanical dog's teeth closed upon it more gently than one might expect from his bulk, and the heavy spiral spring behind him actually wagged as he bore the paper to his master. The latter examined it; and dismissed the strange watchdog to his hole with the aid of a searchlight whose beams were invisible.

"You must excuse this suspicion, young man," said the now mollified Schnickelfritz: "But the greatest of precautions are none too stupendous. It was but yesterday that Tauser was enabled to rescue me, only with difficulty, out of the jaws of two life-insurance *Schlemiehls* who had laid in wait for me."

"Come into the house," he added genially, "and I will give you a cordial for the fright you have had."

He led the way into his living quarters, which occupied but a small portion of the vast lodge—the rest being devoted to his scientific library and apparatus—and produced what I fancied to be a black bottle. He did not, however, proceed to uncork it; but solemnly waved it in close proximity to my person, up and down, in front and behind, to the right and left; and then replaced it on the shelf.

"That administration of the Kappa Sigma ray, my friend," said he, "is equivalent to the consumption of a centilitre of good Holland

schnapps. I am confident that, when I have perfected it, the execution of the laws of this country will be highly ameliorated. And now, why the necessity of your paying me this visit, at some hazard, to bring with you a piece of paper? Has there been an interruption of the mails?"

There was no use endeavoring to conceal the truth from the inventor of the Aleithograph; who might well, at that very minute, have switched an unseen battery of those uncanny devices upon me. I hastily made known the desire of my employers to learn whether the professor had added lately to his list of discoveries any other which might redound to the advancement of science, the benefit of mankind and—since they are practically synonymous—the financial welfare of the professor and of ourselves—who were, if anything, the more synonymous of the parties in interest.

The professor listened, eyeing me from beneath the shaggy eyebrows which are characteristic of all great scientists. Suddenly his face lightened: "I have it," said he, and threw open the door into a vast room.

Like the laboratories of all fictional scientists, it was filled with gigantic, involved machinery, of whose nature I could form no just conception. The hum of machinery filled the air; the glow of tubes, here and there, agitated the ether with rays of whose nature I could define no idea. I did puzzle for an instant as to why these rays, all of wavelengths far too long or too short for the human eye, should be distinguishable: yet I knew that all wonder-working rays are either red, blue or green, when they are not yellow.

The professor divined my thoughts. "My friend," said he: "Just as a chemist puts poison into a bottle of distinctive shape and color, so it is necessary to mix a little light with each ray, lest one should come disastrously in contact with it. Don't stumble through that blue ray there! It might be unfortunate; as I understand that there is a popular suspicion of the morals of all persons who have green complexions, such as you would acquire by the contact."

I stood quite still while the great Schnickelfritz advanced to what appeared to be an electric furnace. He pulled switches—and a drone, which had seemed to permeate the whole laboratory, died down and ceased. He pulled levers that evidently threw bolts, and a great round door yawned slowly open. The professor extended his arm into the cavity, and finally there came forth an aluminum dish containing an oblong block of something which I was at a loss to recognize in that odd blending of lights. He retraced his way into the living quarters, and I followed. From a drawer he produced a knife and a fork; sliced into

illustration by Paul

the curiously-marbled substance; and finally cut off a piece, which he tasted.

"It is quite done," he said, "and now let us have a—what you call a bite. Here is bread, and here is a bottle of water which has been treated

with the Kappa Sigma ray. It is not beer, it is true, but it is wholesome and invigorating."

The sausage, while not in the least like any which I had ever before tasted, seemed quite edible; and I willingly passed my plate for a second slice. "But what," I inquired, "are the ingredients; for I cannot in any way identify this meat?"

The professor stooped, and took up from among a pile of papers a granite paving block: "This is the duplicate of the *Ersatz* sausage you have just eaten, before it was treated with my new Upsilon Omega ray! The material of the granite has been converted into highly-nourishing substances, rich in vitamins and quite capable of sustaining life. No longer will mankind upon the whims of nature or the bounty of Pluvius dependent be! The quartz has become a savory carbohydrate; the feldspar and the mica two proteids of high nitrogenous content. All solely by exposure to my new and easily-generated ray."

"Professor," I inquired earnestly, "have you a telephone here?"

"To call the newspapers?" he demanded frowningly.

"Far be it from so," I answered, "but a matter of important private business which I have just remembered."

"Little they know of it," said the professor, "but this little device of mine enables me to telephone to the outside world while they are unable to disturb me. Speak into this radiophone: the robot outside will complete the connection; while to all calls from the outside he answers that I am sleeping and cannot be disturbed, that I have a sore throat and cannot speak, and that I am investigating the cosmic rays among the Bernese Alps. Would it were so! But make your call."

I put through, as promptly as possible, a call to New York; and having reached my brokers' office, gave instructions to sell Packers' Preferred at the market, to the extent of my balance. I then returned to the repast with slightly-enhanced appetite. There was no doubt that this new invention would do to the meat industry what the household refrigerator has done for Jack Frost, now a gentleman without visible means of support.

"Crash!" What was that? Had one of the great machines broken down or exploded?

I speadily localized the accident, much closer to myself. Some small, and unseen, bit of hard material in the artificial sausage had opposed forcible resistence to my bite; and the result was disastrous to some of Park Avenue's costliest bridgework. I contemplated the offending substance

ruefully, and turned reproachful eyes upon the professor, as I held it forth for his inspection. He too was concerned, at this apparent failure of his process. Suddenly his eyes lighted with enthusiasm.

"Beautiful!" he exclaimed, "Wonderful! My friend, it was an intrusion of jasper into the granite, and behold, the wonderful Upsilon Omega ray has turned it into actual bone. Observe the osseous structure."

"Oh, calcify the osseous structure!" I answered, somewhat annoyed, as a new thought struck me. "Professor, what is the cost of producing this brick of sausage?"

"Only nominal," he answered. "There is no attention needed, the ray machine is durable and needs few replacements. It is practically nothing but the electric current consumed."

"And that may be—"

"Only about seventy-two thousand kilowatt hours for this brick," he said. "Theoretically it should be only two-thirds as much, but there is some necessary loss."

After multiplication of my monthly lighting bill by 1800 (which I performed mentally, notwithstanding the growing ache in my jaw) and a comparison of the product with my bill at the neighborhood delicatessen (in haste too great to allow for liquor deductable) I arose and went again to the telephone in some ire.

While I was going through the process of learning how many wrong numbers there are in a metropolitan exchange, I noticed the professor take up our glasses, dishes, and silverware, and heap them together in a pan which was, apparently, quite innocent of water or soap. Over it he placed a heavy cover, apparently containing a vaccum tube, and connected by a cable to a light fixture. He turned a knob.

"A little toy of my own, and of no value," said he "As you know, no man likes to wash dishes. A turn of the switch—a moment of the Digamma Koppa rays and"—he snapped off the switch and turned the cover over"—"you see, they are cleaned, dried, sterilized, polished and ready to put on the shelf."

"Buhl and Baer?" I said into the phone: "This is Slicker. Cover at once every share of Packers' Preferred you have sold for me; and sell Federated Dish-Washing Machinery short, for all my balance will stand. I'll be in tomorrow morning and put up more collateral!"

A few minutes' talk, though with my handkerchief at my aching face; and I speedily had the professor's signature for a contract, on very favorable terms to ourselves, for the Digamma Koppa device. I could already see the eloquent appeals of our advertising copywriters, addressed

to single and married men alike. A boon alike to benedicts, bachelors and brides—there were millions in the new dish-washer! And certainly, the expense account described so frankly by my chief must bear the cost of new abutments for my dental equipment.

I predicted cheerfully to the professor that his royalty check would be doubled by the ensuing quarter; and, although his own tastes, as you have imagined, were simple enough, the prospect of being able to afford new super-frequency generators was welcome to him.

"The 300-kilowatt converter," said he, "is not sufficent for my purposes in the generation of the ultra-short radiation, which I wish to work further upon. Now see—" He turned a switch.

The wall of the library, opposite the laboratory, melted away in a circle three feet across; and the round opening thus made moved up and down in the wall, as the spot of light thrown by a lantern might do. On the opposite side, we beheld the books on their shelves; and sudden flickerings would blot out the bindings at their backs, so that only rough masses of paper were visible.

"That is the Nu Nu Lambda ray," said Professor Schnickelfritz: "You see its limited range. With a generator of four times the size, I could cause it to penetrate twice as far."

"Twice as far?" I asked: "Why not four times?"

"It is the Law of Inverse Squares!" said the professor solemnly.

"And that prevents you from sending the ray as much further as the power is increased?"

"*Mein Gott,* yes" said the professor: "Otherwise I could send power by radio to New York; yes, to China."

"How long has that been the law?"

"Who knows?" said the old scientist solemnly: "For that, you must consult the philosophers."

I arose to make my departure, with the firm decision to consult our legal department instead. Professor Schnickelfritz opened a garage door and proceeded to emerge with his own private car—a five-ton truck, with which he was wont to bring up his supplies of reading matter, instruments and laboratory machinery from the railroad nearby, on occasions of receiving a shipment. I perched myself on the seat beside him, preferring that to the option of traveling as freight, and in due course of time was delivered, somewhat shaken, at the railway station. From this, considerably later than the due course of time, I was able to board the night train and return, a wearier but more successful man than when I set out from the city.

My dipolomacy in obtaining a contract, so promising of rich returns, won for me a check which more than covered the damages I had experienced in my visit to Rough Neck. The Old Man himself praised my perspicacity, and arrangements were made to put the Digamma Koppa Household Friend—otherwise the "Wypenomor"—into immediate production and publicity. The sales engineers of the company predicted that ten million dollars in retail sales the first year would be found too conservative an estimate.

Flushed with success, I laid before the Old Man the secret which the professor had confided to me at the last moment: the possibility of radio transmission, if once the law that hampered us could be done away with. "To undertake to disregard it outright," I said, "with the elections coming on, is to invite too much campaign publicity; even if the overhead expense for official connivance isn't too high. But I understand that this Law of Inverse Squares is a pretty old one; and it may be possible to get a court decision that it is obsolete, or at last, to be interpreted in the light of modern business conditions."

"Better than that," said the Old Man, with that immediate grasp of the situation that makes him a leader of international business: "I think it possible that we can get Congress to repeal it. Slip the repeal clause into an appropriation bill in conference, just before the inauguration, and it will go through, without much notice to some of the outsiders who would like to get in on the ground floor. I'll get Senator Bloughard on the phone this afternoon. Leave it to me."

He was as good as his word; and when the appropriation bill came up in conference, in the closing hours of the short session of Congress, Bloughard had inserted our clause repealing the "Law of Inverse Squares."

"I am opposed," said Representative Fudge—the old mossback from the Mud Turtle State—" to any such assumption of powers by the Federal Government. The framers of the Constitution, sir, the grandest document ever struck off by the mind of man, reserved the powers of regulating such matters of public welfare to the several states, or to the people thereof. I am not familiar with the Law of Inverse Squares; but I feel it my duty to protest, sir, against this aggrandisement of a centralized authority, which, as the experience alike of Greece, Rome, Sumeria, Samarcand and the Sandwich Islands has indisputably proved, tends but to sap the self-reliance of the citizen and to build up an oligarchic bureaucracy."

"Pipe down, Fudge," returned Bloughard: "You're not on the floor,

and there are no reporters present. You can get leave to print. This clause deals with an economic necessity, and if we are to maintain our foreign trade supremacy, business must be no longer handicapped by archaic restrictions which were already unfashionable in the ox-team age."

"What has this clause to do with our foreign trade supremacy?" inquired Fudge, still hostile: "It is effective only in the United States, and the insular possessions thereof, including Alaska."

"I am not familiar with the technical data involved," returned Bloughard, "but this repeal intended simply to legalize the adoption of modern processes in industry, and therefore to contribute to increased opportunities for the employment of American labor, with a standard of living superior to those of any of the other countries of the world which suffer benightedly under inferior administrative and business methods—At any rate, as a personal favor, I ask the inclusion of this repeal clause in the bill."

And so, as I understand it, it was reported out of conference, and the House formally and perfunctorily agreed. I had not, of course, been present at the conference; but that was the substance of the discussion, as I was told of it by the legal department—and the bill had gone to the President for his signature.

I had started down Pennsylvania Avenue, and was making my way with diffulty through the crowd, when a familiar face became visible. The iron-gray hair and shaggy eyebrows of Professor Schnickelfritz topped a sturdy figure, in a shabby overcoat, which was wedging its way in the opposite direction from the Capitol.

"Professor!" I called, "What brings you here?"

"I am on business with the Bureau," he said, "and I go also to the Observatory. And you, Herr Schlicker?"

"For the inauguration," said I, "and a word in your ear. You know what you told me of the Law of Inverse Squares? In another minute, the President will have signed the bill repealing it—and there won't be any such fool law any more!"

The astonishment on the great scientist's face seemed painful, instead of the rejoicing I had reason to expect. He gripped my arm: "You lie!" he exclaimed.

"It is true," I answered proudly: "We've fixed all that. In another minute the Law of Inverse Squares will cease to apply in the United States."

"Mein Gott!" exclaimed Schnickelfritz: "Radiation, gravity, the sun! For your lives, stop him!"

He turned as if to dash toward the Capitol and, in that moment, I felt throughout my whole frame that the presidential pen had finished its task. The law of Inverse Squares had been repealed!

A giant hand seemed to crush down on that milling throng, as the full force of all Earthly gravitation was exerted upon them; and, as I fell, I realized that the great dome of the Capitol, too, had fallen to that irresistible force of attraction!

No time to think! It was but an instant later that the greater power of solar gravitation exerted its force. The entire United States, with its insular possessions (including Alaska) had been wrenched from the bosom of puny Mother Earth by the resistless grip of the Sun! And, as the whole solar radiation of light and heat, no longer restricted by the Law of Inverse Squares, burst upon us, the whole heavens became one mass of incalculably-heated yellow flame, into which we plunged, without creating even a ripple, and were there utterly, instantly consumed!

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Coming Next Issue

And here in this eternity of emptiness where we had thought ourselves the first of humans ever to penetrate, lay the derelict Ship of Doom. It hung now no more than a mile away. It seemed, from this viewpoint, to resemble an old-time spaceship of the sort which once attempted the Moon journey and failed to do more than rise out of Earth's atmosphere.

Yet, when soon we were approaching still closer, I saw that this could be no spaceship at all. It showed itself to be in form like a ball, flattened well down at its poles so that it had the aspect of a disc. I could not tell at first how large it might be. But Rance was steadily maneuvering us closer to it.

I saw at last that it was a coppery metal disc perhaps a hundred feet in diameter, with bulging convex bottom and top to give an interior height of some thirty feet. A deck encircled its outer rim—a narrow deck of what might have been glassite panes and with a row of bullseye windows. And in the center, upon the top of the disc a curiously bulging little conning tower was bravely set.

As we drew forward I saw that the tower was a woven mesh of wire strands. The disc seemed slowly rotating upon a polar axis so that all its deck windows passed our line of vision in a silent review. And between two of the bullseyes there was a small door-porte.

Rance called at me, "Good Lord, Allerton, see that door! It's partly open. There's no air in the damned thing. No one can be alive in it!"

I did not answer. Was anyone, dead or alive, within this strange little derelict? It seemed not. No face was at any of the bullseyes. And what was this little thing doing out here? It was not a spaceship. Even with my limited technical knowledge, I could not fail to see now that there was no means by which this strange affair could navigate space. Then how came it here? What human had devised it? And how had he brought it here? And where was he, with his little mechanism poised here in the vast eternal silences?

A different sort of contest sponsored by Hugo Gernsback brought forth a different story by one of the oldtime favorites

THE DERELICT OF SPACE

by RAY CUMMINGS

Down To Earth

(Continued from page 7)

respectable literary standards, is astonishing.

SaM, as he is often referred to in print, has had innumerable articles on science fiction and science fiction personalities in past science fiction magazines; and these were the basis for his two books, *Explorers of the Infinite* and *Seekers of Tomorrow,* dealing with past and present science fiction and fantasy authors, not without arousing a good deal of controversy. Whether someone else might have done the same job without being any less controversial (though perhaps on different points) remains an open question; the most important fact is that no one did, and had Moskowitz not done it, it might not have been done at all. SaM has also edited more anthologies than I can presently remember, as well as some I haven't heard of, since he has done some on a "ghost" basis, doing the work and letting someone else have the credit line.

Mike Nave, who didn't feel that *The Hell Planet* ended right, and did feel it was full of scientific blunders "so big a 9 or 10 year old could spot them", and who fails to enjoy Laurence Manning ("No matter how well he writes a story I just don't enjoy it. I don't dislike it, but I don't enjoy it. One thing, nothing he does surprises me. When he writes it just seems to be the way things should be. And he doesn't generate a feeling of suspense. But other than the lack of surprise and suspense, his stories are superb."), saves his biggest guns for another matter:

"I would like to say that I hate interior illustrations. Some people may not have the mental capacity to read a story without having an illustration to explain the two and three syllable words, but I do. If you want illustrations, read comics. They have some pretty good illustrations. I found the cover of the Spring issue attractive but please don't have the cover illustrating some part of a story within. Fifty percent of the time an illustration gives away some part of the story and even if it doesn't, I'd rather use my imagination than some artist's.

"And puh-leese put *The Reckoning* in the issue in which its stories are discussed. For example, in issue #6, the letters pages discussed #4 but The Reckoning deals with issue #5.

Reader Nave has no complaint about *The Invulnerable Scourge*, which he places first in our 6th (Spring) issue.

On your synchronization plea, that is something which we can do; and the situation being the same with *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* as it is with *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*—few letters on the newest issue being received by the time I have to prepare copy for the next issue—the adjustment you ask for shall be started at once. In this issue, letters and *The Reckoning* refer to our Spring Issue (#6); next issue, it'll be #7, and so on.

In this magazine, we are offering the readers nostalgia, for the most part: real, in the instances of those who read the old magazines of the 20's and 30's when they came out; vicarious in the instances of those who grew up with a later generation of science fiction, and to whom these old issues were curios in their collections, or who have heard about them, but never seen them at all. Now a very important part of the flavor of these old magazines was their artwork, the efforts, for the most part, of artists now departed this life, or retired from science fiction illustrating: Frank R. Paul, H. W. Wessolowski ("Wesso"), Leo Morey (whose best work, unfortunately is not presently availabe to us), Mark Marchioni, and Elliot Dold.

Morey appeared exclusively in the *AMAZING STORIES* group until 1938, when the titles were sold to Ziff-Davis. Except for appearance in a two-issue magazine in 1931 *(MIRACLE SCIENCE AND FANTASY STORIES)*, Dold was an exclusive with *ASTOUNDING STORIES*. Marchioni appeared in the *WONDER* group and *ASTOUNDING STORIES*, but never in *AMAZING STORIES*, monthly or quarterly. Wesso made his debut with the *AMAZING* group, then became the chief artist for *ASTOUNDING STORIES*, though his drawings continued to appear in *AMAZING STORIES* monthly until the end of

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THE FORGOTTEN PLANET
by S. P. Wright

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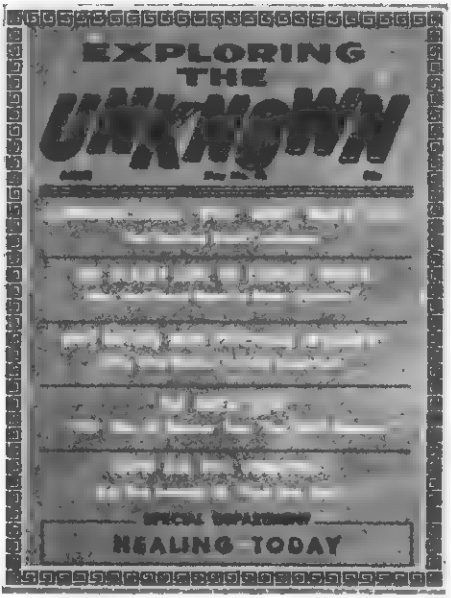

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1931, and *AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY* until the end of 1932. Only Frank R. Paul appeared in *all* the titles, although he was principally an artist for Hugo Gernsback, which meant that he shifted from the *AMAZING* to the *WONDER* group in 1929, although occasional pictures in *AMAZING* continued to appear up to mid 1931, and Harry Bates got him to illustrate some stories for *ASTOUNDING,* while it was under the original, Clayton banner; he did not appear in the Tremaine (Street & Smith) *ASTOUNDING STORIES.*

These men were all busy commercial illustrators, doing a considerable bulk of work (Paul, Wesso, and Morey appeared outside science fiction or weird magazines, as well) at the depressingly low prices paid for artwork during the Great Depression. Much of their output was considerably below their best, and in the case of Frank R. Paul, the amount of time he would give to a particular illustration depended upon what he was getting paid; he did the best he could under the circumstances, as he told Sam Moskowitz, but he often could not afford to spend time on faces (and when he could, Paul's humans were noticeably better, as is proven by many of his drawings for the Munsey, and later Popular Publications, issues of *FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES* and *FANTASTIC NOVELS,* 1939 and thereafter.) Wesso, I was told by Leo Morey in the 50's, was blind in one eye; but I suspect that his situation was not too much different from that of Paul's. Apparently he was well paid by Clayton, at least in the first years of *ASTOUNDING STORIES,* for he *could* draw quite good human figures, as much of his artwork in the 1930 magazines demonstrates—as does his work for the Street & Smith *ASTOUNDING,* 1936. Morey himself was excellent on any kind of "nature" scene, but his human faces were never really good, even under the best conditions; it was better when we saw his people from the rear. Marchioni and Dold both had solid merits as well as serious drawbacks, and again it is the human element mostly, although M. M.'s very first efforts showed well drawn figures and faces; thereafter, they became increasingly wooden; Dold's were never good from the start.

Nonetheless, when any of these five men was on his feed, we had wonderful pictures to look at in the magazines, and our readers have heartily approved our using some of the better oldtime illustrations when we are able to do so. I decline to use a picture which *I* consider positively bad, or which "gives away" the crucial element of a story; and some just won't come out acceptably at all. However, I'm alert to your letters and preference pages, and should a substantial number of you agree with Mr. Nave, then we'll have to reconsider the question. Thus far, however, his complaint is unique; moreover everyone else has deplored cover pictures which do *not* illustrate some story in the issue.

Joseph Napolitano, who just discovered FSF and considers us "one of the better magazines of this type of fiction," adds: "First off let me tell you that I thought your editorial was really one of the best I have

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What Was The Secret Of The Silent Slayer?

"I know every animal up at Groote Schuur better than I know you, Doctor, and I was born in up-country Africa and have been tens of thousands of miles through it. There's no ape or other animal could make those fingerprints. . ."

There was an awed silence as one after another each man took careful stock of the dark purple marks on the dead woman's wrists. Undoubtedly they were bruises. Each finger, bone for bone, was distinctly traced, but the fingers were connected nearly to their tips with closely woven nets. The hands that had made these marks were webbed as the feet of a duck or, perhaps, as those of a frog.

"No," the doctor admitted presently, and there was a shudder in his voice. "Those hands certainly do not belong to any animal, and they most emphatically don't appear to belong to any human being . . . "

You Won't Want To Miss

WEBBED HANDS

by Ferdinand Berthoud

Complete in the Summer Issue of

STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

see page 125

ever read. When so much of today's science fiction is basically plot and depends largely upon characterization and invention, it's nice to see someone who feels that science fiction should be a combination of all six story elements you mention. All the authors you talked about have been the authors I have read and re-read in the last two years . . .

"*The Hell Planet*, for its time, still passed muster today, but I thought *The Individualists* was somewhat better. While I like de Camp, I didn't care much for *The Dragon-Kings;* as a matter of fact, I didn't get it! As for *The Invulnerable Scourge*—it was well written, but didn't seem to have it—maybe I don't like bugs. Burt K. Filer's story was all right, but reading this story I couldn't help thinking of *The Rack*, by Ketchum. The three novels by Jones which you recommended: I'd like to inform you that there are now four. They are, as you say, good stories to give your brain a rest, and while I read all of them and enjoyed them all, they're not worth much more. Incidentally, I think that *Time's Mausoleum* was the best of all the series, and that some authors today could learn something from this story, especially in the area of Reward.

"I like your letter department. Oh, yes: Mike Grimshawe said that he has yet to see reviews of Delany's novels, *Babel-17* and *The Einstein Intersection*. If he can get his hands on a review of *The Einstein Intersection* by Algis Budrys, he'll see that it didn't do so well. Everything the Budrys said I agreed with; I'm not trying to knock Delany—it's just what Budrys says is true, and

it isn't complimentary. As for *Babel-17*, I haven't read it, but I heard that it's better than *The Einstein Intersection*. . . Anyway, I like your magazine, and hope to read it as long as it's around."

And still another Professor Jameson collection has come out, so that as of this writing, the series runs to five; my impression is that it is good for at least two more volumes, before we run out of the stories published. And also that Jones has a number of unpublished stories in the series, so we may see some which will not be reprint, though written in the period of the others.

At the time I commented upon Mr. Grimshawe's letters, I had not read anything by Samuel R. Delany, but have read *Babel-17* since then, and an article, as well as a short story, *Aye, and Gomorrah*, which also won a Nebula.

While some authors are unjustly neglected, others are unjustly praised—in that they are given a false impression of the extent to which they have actually arrived by overlavish adulation over works which, however promising in some respects show serious flaws in others. I do not consider the novel prize material. The short story is much better, although, as I noted elsewhere, perversely I respect it, rather than love it. But these two samples have been sufficient to arouse my interest in reading Delany, as well as my indignation at his having been presented with so-called honor which was really an insult to the intelligence which his writing indicates. I shall continue to read him with love and hope.

Has There Ever Been Such A Thing As A Natural Flyer?

With the exception of Ken Morey there was only one man in Ethiopia who could fly. And there was only one man in the world crazy enough to attempt suicide in a pursuit ship he had never flown, and which he could never land. That man was Jefferson Rolfe. And Morey knew that Rolfe was in the cockpit of the Wasp, climbing up and up to meet the threat of the enemy bombers.

High above, still concealed by the darkness, the enemy bombing formation dived earthward. They came with the complete contempt of men who know well that nothing can oppose them or do them harm. They dived in formation. The thin note of the multi-motors became a shrill screaming. They were over the city—down under five thousand feet. They were suddenly visible. They grew wings out of the blackness. They assumed shape.

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BLACK ACE

by GEORGE BRUCE

complete in Issue #4 of

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see page 125

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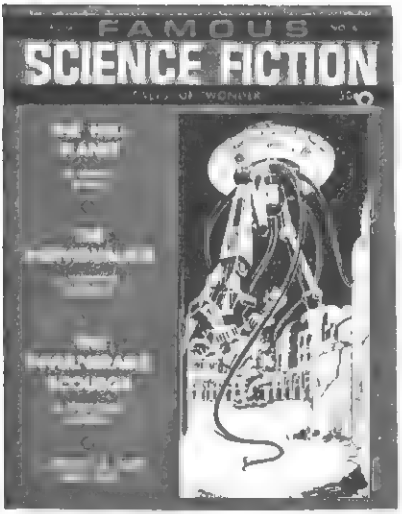

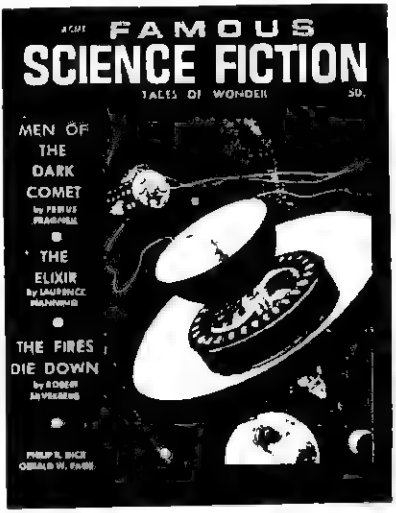

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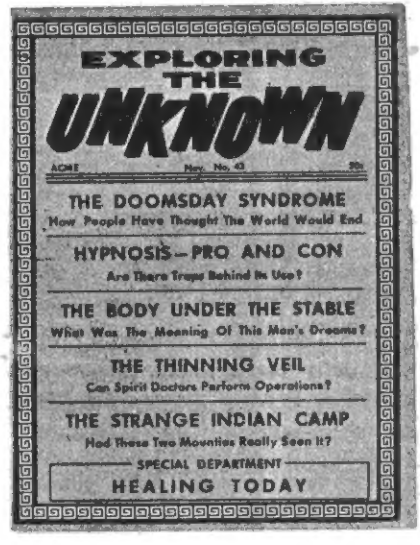
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